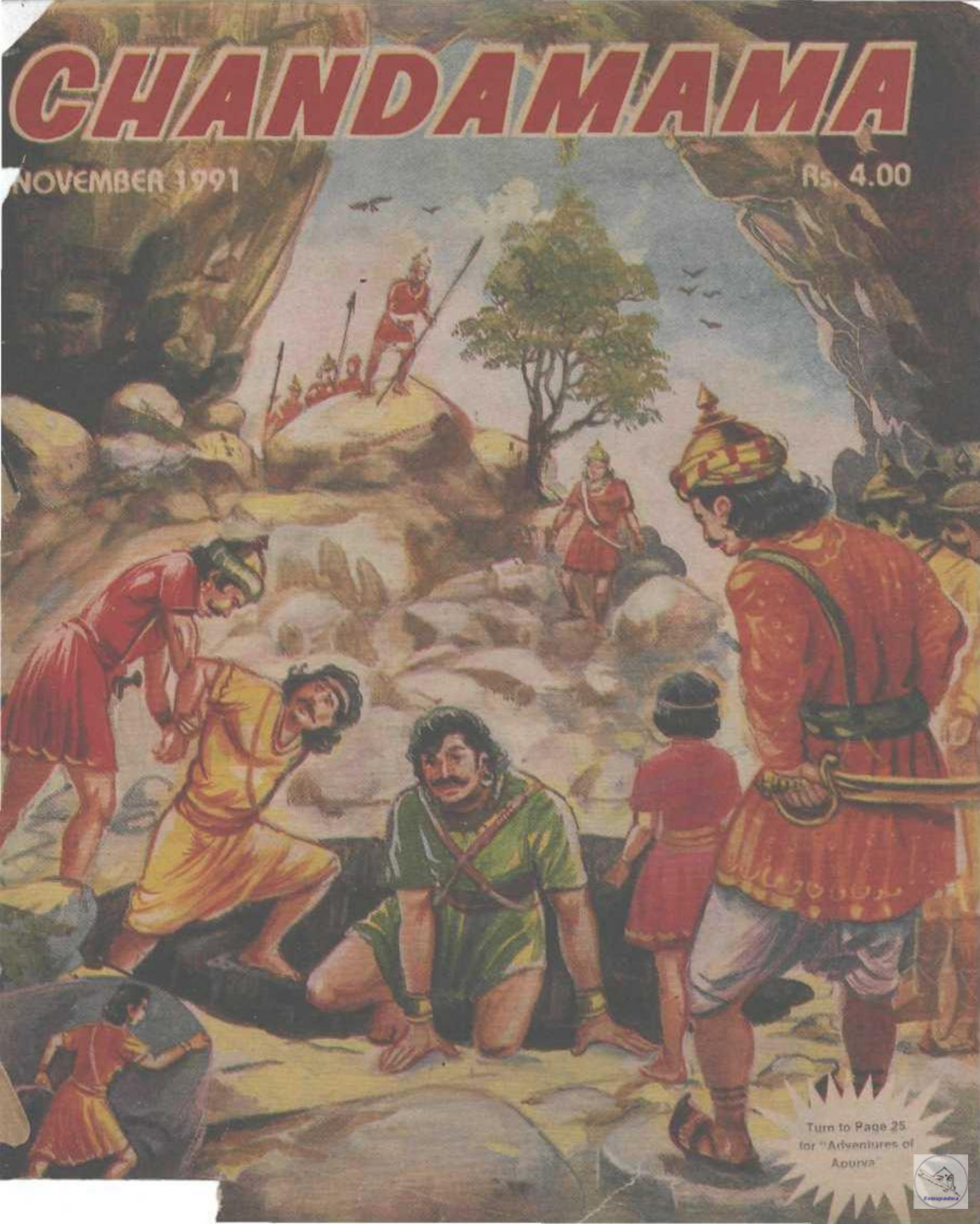


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The Mystery OF



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The Secret Seekers investigate and...

"What beautiful blue eyes Songbird has," said Pooja looking at its picture. "Let's go over and see her."

THE SONGBIRD'S STOLEN!

On their BSA SLRs they rode to Songbird's cage. "Let's see if this works," said Ralph ringing his BSA SLR's bell. It always did, but not



this time. Pooja suddenly whispered, "Songbird's eyes look green." Obviously it wasn't Songbird! "Songbird's stolen!"



the Bird Patch



THE STRANGER SPEAKS

"What happened?" asked a stranger. When told, he expressed sympathy and walked away. The next day the Secret Seekers rode to the countryside on their BSA SLRs. Suddenly, through his binoculars, Vipul spotted the stranger walking to the house beyond. Wasn't he humming a familiar tune? But hadn't he said that he was a stranger to town? That he didn't know Songbird?

ON THE TRAIL

Excited, they followed him, covering his tracks with their BSAs. Gently applying their BSA's brakes, they waited. A short while later, he locked up and left. The Secret Seekers climbed over. What they saw inside was shocking. Rare birds caged and stuffed birds with their destination tags! Then they heard Songbird. Precious little Songbird. "Quick swing into action..."

But why did the BSA SLR Secret Seekers suspect the stranger? He was the thief!

So that's it for now, friends. More mysteries will soon come wheeling your way. But until then, happy cycling on your BSA SLRs.

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**And News Flash, Let Us Know
and More!**

NEXT ISSUE

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A TEST OF HIS MIGHT: Ravana is furious when he is told about the destruction caused by a monkey. What upsets him more is the information that this monkey has had a meeting with Sita. He sends the mightiest of his warriors, and word comes back that the monkey has either killed them or overpowered them. At last, Ravana sends his son, Indrajit, to capture the monkey. And he succeeds. The captive is brought before Ravana. Another exciting episode from VEER HANUMAN.

A FOOL AND HIS FORTUNE: Kannamma asks her son, Muniyan, to go and sell a dress she has stitched. He "sells" it to the statue of a woman as she, according to the lazy fellow, has an honest face. He goes to collect the price the next day and comes back with a fortune. The mother has no confidence in her foolish son, so as to leave a fortune in his hands. What's her solution? The lighter side of the story has an interesting end.

PLUS the all-time favourites like PANCHATANTRA, ADVENTURES OF APURVA, and the CHANDAMAMA SUPPLEMENT.

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SCIENCE IN OUR LIFE

"Without Science there is no future for any society. Even with Science, unless it is controlled by some spiritual impulses, there is also no future."

That was Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in his address to the Association for the Advancement of Science at the University of Ceylon, some thirty years ago. How true!

One great thing about Science is that it does not accept anything on mere conjecture. Everything has to be proved beyond any doubt. All acceptance comes only after experiment which has no room for any speculation.

This is the reason why development of Science and Technology has revolutionised human life all over the world. Agriculture, industry, defence, health management—in fact, there are very few spheres of human activity which have not experienced the impact of such development.

However, despite its manifold benefits, Science has not been able to solve any of man's moral or spiritual problems. Society is still groping in the dark to find out what its future will be. The need, therefore, is to make Science search for the ultimate Truth.



HISTORY IS REVERSED

The three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were among the seven independent nations admitted as full-fledged members of the U.N. at the 46th session of its General Assembly on September 17 last. The other four were the two Koreas (South and North), and the two Pacific island nations of Micronesia and Marshall Islands.



The Baltic states, got their membership within days of gaining their independence from the Soviet Union. Once part of the Russian empire, they were freed from the Czarist regime after the 1917 Russian revolution. However, soon after the Second World War broke out (September 1939), the Soviet leader, Josef Stalin, and the German Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, came to an agreement by which the Soviet Union annexed the three states in 1940. They smarted under the Soviet domination for half-a-century, marking their time to declare independence.

Lithuania was the first to do so, in March 1990, while Estonia and Latvia announced their secession from the Soviet Union taking advantage of the short-lived August coup two-and-a-half months ago when President Gorbachev was out of power for 70 odd hours. On his return to Moscow and resumption of power, the Soviet President declared his readiness to accept the independence



of the three Baltic republics. On September 6, the Soviet Parliament reversed 51 years of history by recognising the independence of the three republics.

There followed a formal application to the U.N. for membership, which was first approved by the Security Council and then by the General Assembly. As free nations enjoying self-determination, between 1917 and 1940, the three were active members of the old League of Nations. After their admission to the U.N., the Latvian President, Mr. Anatoly Gorbunovs, remarked: "The world community

has found the family members it lost during World War II."

The U.N. Secretary General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, at the flag-hoisting ceremony, commented that the U.N. had taken a further important step towards the goal of universality of membership.

The Presidents of all the three Baltic nations, who were present at the United Nations, asserted that they wanted to maintain political and economic ties with the Soviet Union, and called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from their territories. "We wish to be good neighbours," they said.



अप्रियं पुरुषं चापि परद्रोहं परस्त्रियम् ।
अधर्ममनृतं चैव दूरात् प्राज्ञो विवर्जयेत् ॥



A wise man keeps himself away from a person he dislikes, from enmity to others, from other's wives, from unrighteous conduct, and from falsehood.



सम्पदि यस्य न हर्षो विपदि विषादो रणे च धीरत्वम् ।
तं भुवनत्रयतिलकं जनयति जननी सुतं विरलम् ॥



THUS, TWO GOOD FRIENDS WERE TURNED INTO BITTER ENEMIES BY DAMA-NAKA.

YOU IDIOT! YOU AND YOUR DIPLOMACY! YOU'VE MADE THESE TWO FRIENDS MORTAL ENEMIES, READY TO KILL EACH OTHER.



Rarely does a mother give birth to a son—a pride of the three worlds—who keeps his equanimity in prosperity as well as adversity and who remains calm amidst a war.

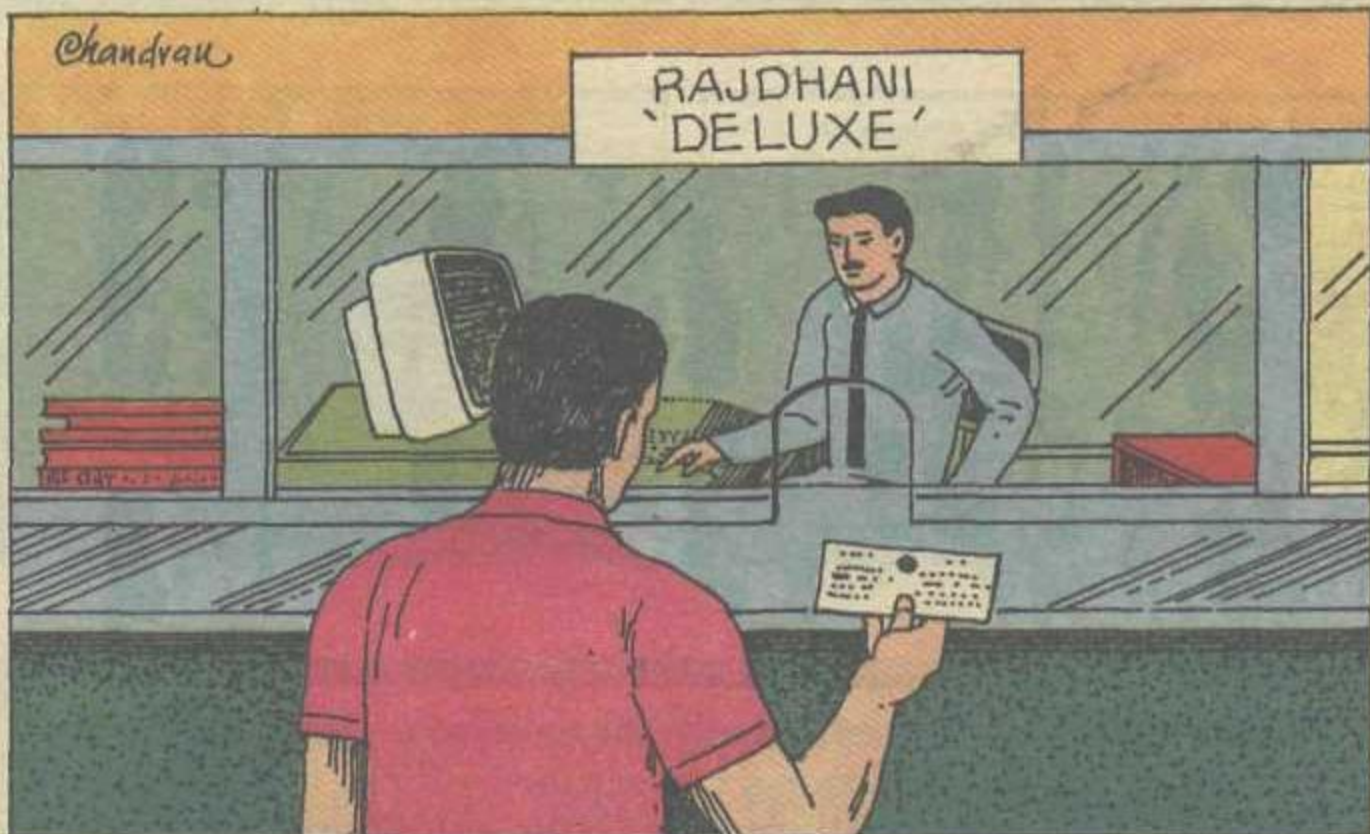
17



LUXURIOUS AND EXPENSIVE

Rahul Sumant Bhadra, of Pune, went to book his berth on the Rajdhani. On the board at the ticket-counter, he saw the word 'deluxe' appended to the name. On the computerised ticket was written 'de-luxe'. A doubt lurked in his mind: had he been booked on a different train? No. It is Rajdhani, all right—a train with 'luxurious' compartments, much better and beautiful than those on ordinary trains. Anything of a better quality than the common kind is generally described as 'de luxe' (note separate words). It denotes that such items are expensive, too.

Darshana Nair, also of Pune, has learnt of the Great Wall of China from her text-books, that it is some 2,250 km long (it was longer, many many years ago) and has a height of nearly 8m, and was built of earth and stones, with a brick-face, to ward off invasions of Turkish and Mongol tribesmen. What baffled her was, when she read somewhere that somebody was mocked at for "counting the stones in the Great Wall"! Could anyone do that? No. If you were to attempt doing something impossible or without a purpose (like counting the waves in the ocean—Never ending), it would be like counting the stones in the Great Wall. Maybe, whoever had built it some 2,200 years ago must have kept an exact count of the stones that went into the length and breadth of the Great Wall. Let's not demolish it, even jocularly!





TALES FROM MANY LANDS (Burma)

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Long, long ago, in a small kingdom there lived a washerman. Whenever anybody wore clothes washed by him, it looked as though they were donning new dresses. For, so well did he wash and press them! He was known by one and all for his good and honest work. No doubt, he prospered well.

One day, well before the sun rose over the hills, there was a gentle knock on his door. When he opened it, he saw the potter standing before him. "Dear

friend, what brings you here so early in the morning?" he asked.

"Tomorrow the king has called me for some important work. But I've only one pair of good dress that badly requires to be washed and pressed. Could you please do it for me?" said the potter.

"I'm indeed blessed," replied the washerman, "for wearing the clothes washed by me when you go to meet the king!"

The potter handed over a pair of blue dress, and returned home. It was for the first time that he



was going to wear clothes washed and pressed by the well-known washerman.

But when he went back, the next day, to take his clothes, he could not recognise them. They had been blue; now they were white!

"What have you done to my clothes? What happened to their colour?" he demanded.

"My friend, the quality of colour in which your clothes were dyed was very poor. When the clothes—and you had dirtied them rather too much—were put in hot water, the colour left them in patches. They looked funny. I

had to labour very hard to remove it entirely. But I'm not charging any extra for that," said the washerman.

"Extra? It's for me to demand compensation from you, for the loss of my precious blue!" said the potter.

Soon they were quarrelling. The washerman threatened to report to the king if the potter did not pay him his due. But he refused to pay and left in a huff.

As the potter made his way to the palace, he heard the royal herald proclaim, "The king wants a white elephant. Who-soever can get it will be handsomely rewarded."

The king asked him to make a special pot out of a particular clay. For, the queen had been suddenly taken ill, and it was only in that pot that some herbs were to be crushed and the medicine made for her.

"You're wearing a beautiful dress, as white as snow!" remarked the king, as the potter was taking his leave.

"Yes, Your Majesty," replied the potter with a naughty smile, "actually it was blue in colour but the washerman turned it white. He's the pride of your realm,

O king. He can make everything white. Why don't you ask him to fulfil your long cherished wish to possess a white elephant? He can wash any of your grey elephants white! He has the magic!"

"Ah! Ah!" exclaimed the king. "Is it so? A genius in my kingdom and I'm not aware of it! A white elephant at last! It is a good omen and will bring us happiness!"

On his way home, the potter chuckled to himself. "Now let's see how the fellow faces this challenge. He had the cheek to threaten me!"

The washerman was summoned to the king's presence. "I hear you can make everything white!" asked the king.

"I only clean the clothes of your subjects to the best of my ability, Your Majesty," replied the man humbly.

"Now I want you to wash my dark grey elephant into white. Mind you, if you fail, you shall be banished from our kingdom," ordered the king.

The washerman was surprised at this strange command. He thought for a while and easily guessed that the potter must have been behind this mischief.

"Your Majesty," he replied in



a measured tone, "I'm prepared to carry out your desire and wash the elephant by the same methods I wash people's clothes. But none of the pots I have is large enough to contain the animal!"

The potter was called once again and asked to make a pot that would hold the royal elephant. He was at his wit's end. How could he ever make a pot large enough to hold such a gigantic beast? But he dare not disobey the king's order. He gathered his kinsmen to help him in his task. The entire family somehow managed to fashion a

large vessel, from a huge quantity of clay.

The washerman was again summoned to the palace. The elephant was led in. Potfuls of soap, buckets of water, and scrubbing brushes were kept ready. The king and his courtiers sat with curiosity in their eyes as the great beast was directed towards the huge pot.

Alas, no sooner had the elephant stepped into it than the giant vessel broke into a hundred pieces.

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed the washerman. "We'll need a much stronger pot for the elephant to be washed white!"

The king thereupon sent for the potter and scolded him. "The pot was too fragile for the purpose. Now make a stronger one by dawn tomorrow."

The potter went back looking as pale as a ghost. Once again he and his family toiled day and night to make a pot strong enough to take an elephant's weight. The task was at last completed and the vessel was delivered at the palace.

Now the elephant was made to step right into the pot and this time it did not break. Everybody looked with bated breath as the washerman poured soap and water into the pot and lit a fire



underneath. "The animal has to be boiled like clothes for the dirty grey to be washed out of its skin," he explained.

But when the water began to boil, the elephant grew restless. It trumpeted and lifted his forelegs and brought them down with such ferocity that not only did the hot water splash on the king's face but the pot broke again, its contents flowing in all directions.

The potter was again asked to make a sturdier pot in two days or else lose his head. He left the kingdom that very day.

"O king!" said the washerman with a low bow. "Allow me to take the royal elephant home for

a night and on the morrow I shall deliver it white as cream."

"All right. But remember, if you fail, you shall be banished from my land," replied the king rather sternly.

When the moon shone over the little kingdom and everybody was asleep, the washerman quietly led the elephant into his backyard. Placing a ladder across it, he climbed with a bucket in one hand and a brush in the other and began to whitewash the animal. By morning he had covered it with half-a-dozen coats."

The king's joy knew no bounds when he saw the washerman



leading a snow-white elephant into the palace. "So, you have at last washed the elephant white!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Your Majesty," replied the washerman with a twinkle in his eyes, "I've completely white washed the dark grey elephant."

The king in his excitement did not observe how the clever washerman had played with his words. He at once rewarded him with a thousand gold coins and a handsome horse. A holiday was declared in honour of the white elephant and the washerman, and there was much rejoicing.

When all were thus busy enjoying the festive atmosphere, the washerman, mounted his horse and sneaked out of the kingdom.

"At least till the next rains, no one will be able to find the truth behind the white elephant," he

hought as he reached the edge of a forest.

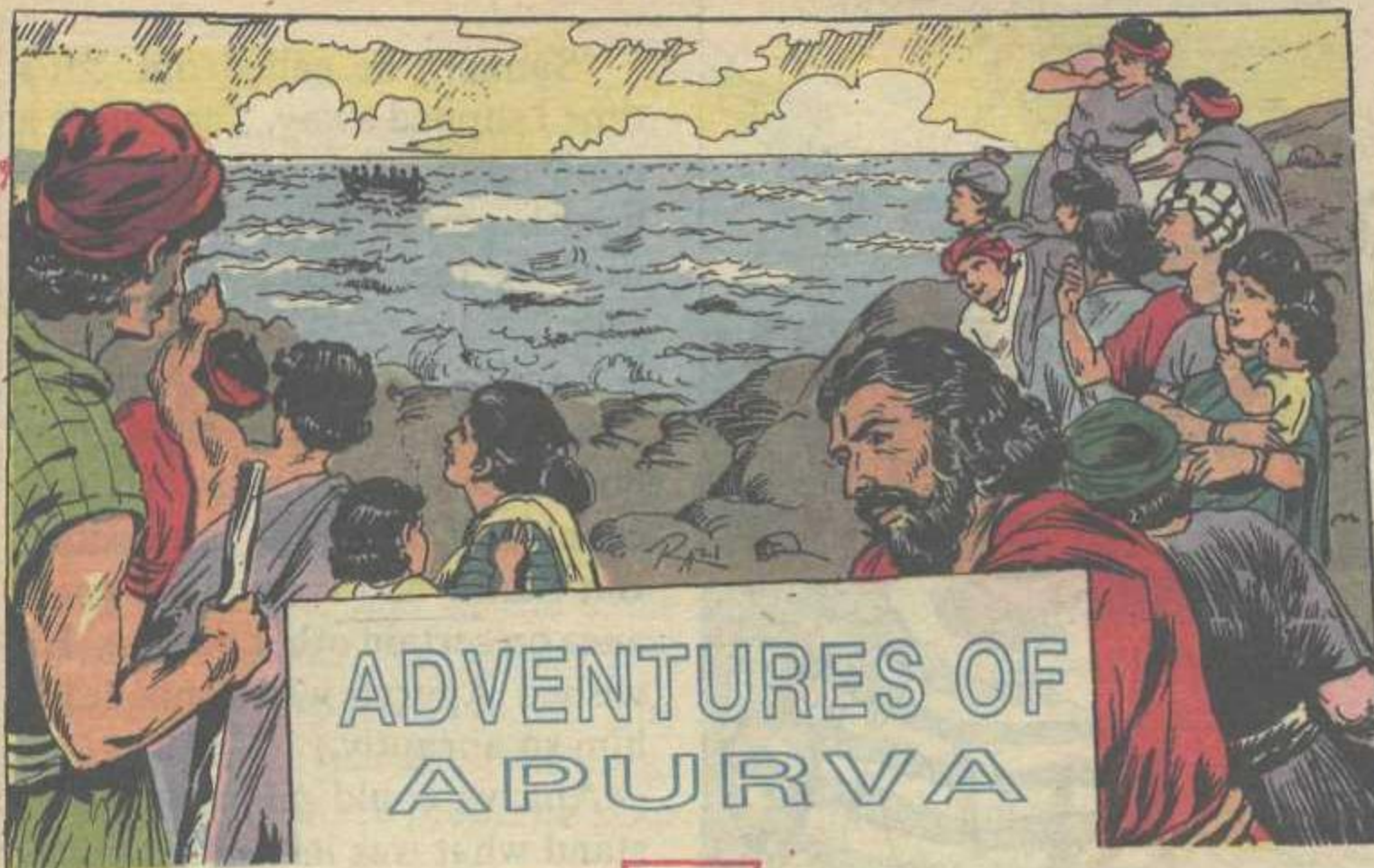
Evening had set in. Tying his horse to the trunk of a tree, he sat under it and soon fell fast asleep. In the morning, when the sweet chirping of the birds woke him, whom do you think he saw sitting beside him? None other than the potter himself!

"Dear friend, it's due to your foolishness that you're here today. I, too, have left the kingdom, but richer by a thousand gold coins and a beautiful horse. I'm going to settle down in the neighbouring kingdom, marry, and live happily."

As for the king, he joyfully lived in his dreams of good omen and prosperity that his white elephant will bring him some-day—but only till the next monsoon.

—Retold by Anup Kishore Das





9

(Apurva who is in size no bigger than a doll, but possesses the power of a giant combined with the goodness of a god, has saved so many people from death and danger. With the help of a village boy, Samir, he rescues five boys from a gang of pirates. A breakaway group of pirates goes to collect some hidden treasure from an island. While they lie drunk, Apurva's party leaves for the shore carrying the treasure.)

The boat bringing the boys ashore was sighted by some villagers. By then word was passed that the boys who had outwitted the notorious pirates had once again gone on a voyage for an unknown destination.

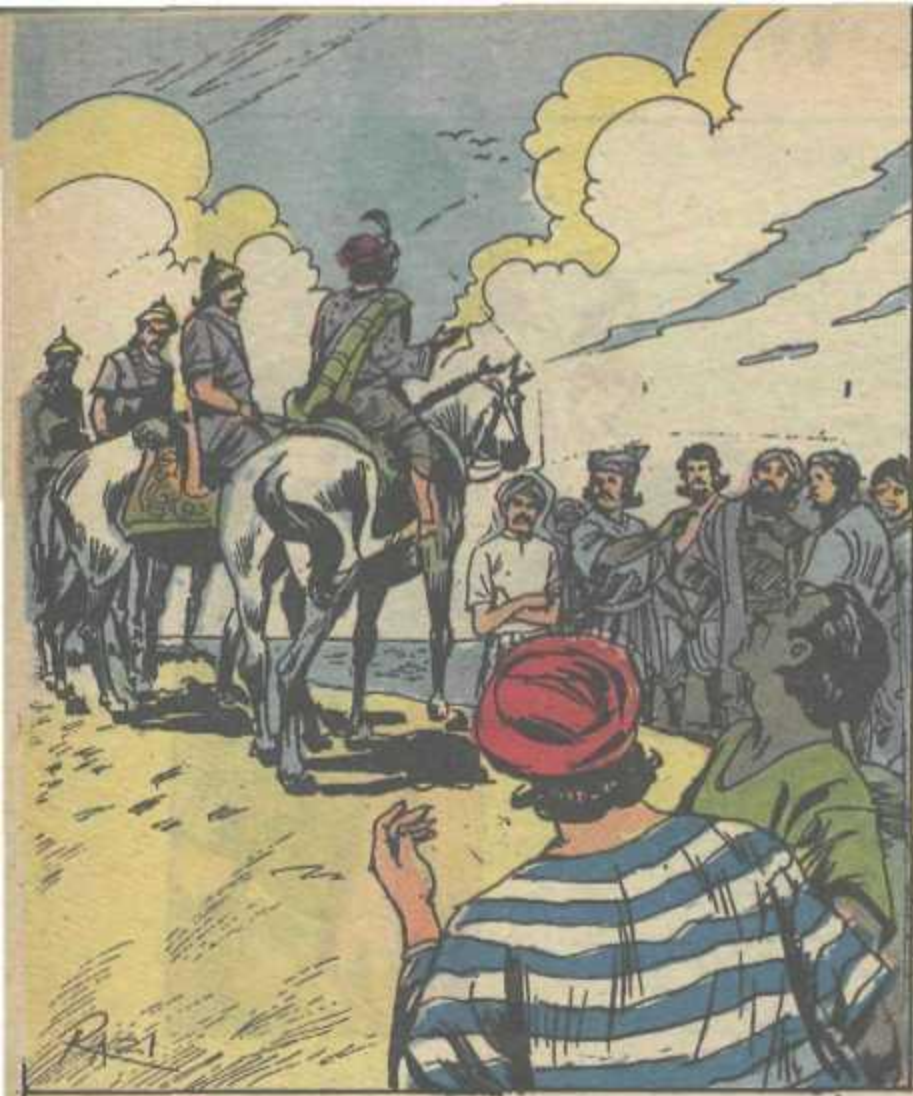
"The brave Samir and his party are returning!" shouted those who sighted the boat, and

they ran to inform the villagers about it.

Two miles away from the shore, the king had a beautiful orchard and a small castle amidst it, beside a lake. Occasionally he camped there for a change. It so happened that he was there when the news regarding the boys reached him.

THE LAST PIRATES





The king had been fascinated by the boys, particularly Samir. He got onto his horse and, followed by his bodyguards, reached the seashore. The parents and kinsmen of the boys were already there. They greeted the king with due respect.

"Any idea where the boys had been?" he asked a senior villager.

"No, Your Majesty, nobody knows anything about it," he replied.

Standing on the edge of the boat, and looking at the shore with his wonderfully sharp eyes, Apurva could grasp the situation.

"Samir!" he called out. "It's time I slipped away. The king is a good man. Tell him that the wealth you've brought must be used for the welfare of the poor folk."

Samir bowed to Apurva. There was no point in asking him how he would slip away. He was capable of doing the impossible. But Samir had wanted his guidance on certain other matters. He wished Apurva would not leave him so abruptly.

Apurva could perhaps understand what was in Samir's mind. "My friend," he said, "tell the king about those unfortunate fellows lying on the island. Left like that, they might perish."

Apurva jumped onto the back of a dolphin and lay down on it, giving it some instructions. The dolphin started swimming in a direction slightly different from the direction in which the boat itself was sailing. As Samir looked on, the dolphin swam at an extraordinary speed. Samir knew that on reaching the shore, Apurva would run and as he gathered speed, he would also become invisible.

The boat reached the confluence of the sea and the river. The



waves there were mild. Some of the able-bodied villagers entered the water and helped the boys to get down from the boat.

After greeting the king, Samir told him how they had managed to bring the hidden treasure. The king went up to the boat and saw casket-loads of jewellery. Never before had he seen so much. He was delighted, and at the same time astonished. As suggested by Samir, he promised to use the wealth for the benefit of the poor. He asked Samir to prepare a plan for it.

"Your Majesty, the treasure can be stored in your orchard castle for the time being. It'll

remain well protected there."

"Let it be so," agreed the king.

"But what's more urgent is, the pirates stranded on the island should be brought back," said Samir.

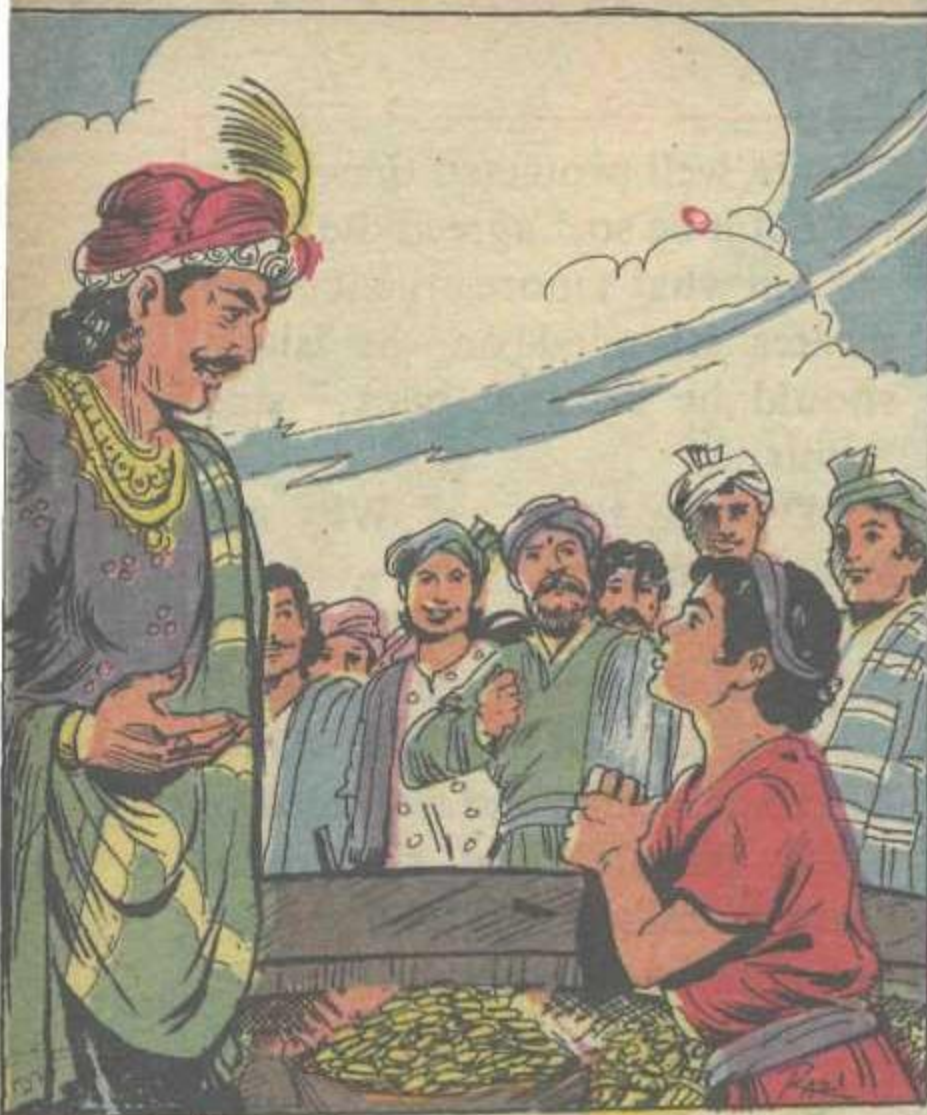
"Do you think so? Why not leave them there?"

"Your Majesty, they may die!"

"They deserve to die even if they are rescued from the island. They have killed and wounded so many people, and ruined so many families. Of course, we must first capture them. Then the law will take its course," said the king.

He then passed on some instructions to one of his body-





guards. His capital was only an hour's galloping away. By mid-day, two big boats carrying fifty soldiers reached the confluence. Samir and his friends volunteered to guide the soldiers to the island. The treasure had by then been taken to the castle. So, the boys and the king's general boarded the pirates' boat which was piloted ahead of the other two boats, under the guidance of the boys.

They had set sail in the early hours of the night. It was a beautiful dawn when they approached the little island. Samir was directing the crew as

to where they should anchor. The rocks were still some yards away. Suddenly a stone came flying. It narrowly missed the general who stood by Samir's side.

"So, the fools have decided to offer resistance!" observed the general. Then, raising his impressive voice to a high pitch, he shouted, "Listen to me, you pirates, you can't escape. You're five and we're more than fifty. Surrender! That's the only course left for you. If you do as I say, your punishment may be less severe. Otherwise, you're doomed to die, be it here or in the capital."

By then more stones came flying from the island. They were followed by even more.

"Shoot!" ordered the general. Instantly, fifty arrows flew towards the area of the island from where the stones were coming.

Suddenly, there were no more stones. The boats touched the island without any difficulty. The general told Samir, "Now you all take rest on the boat. I wouldn't like you and your friends to expose yourselves to any attack from the pirates. Let my men confront them."

The general once again called upon the pirates to surrender. But there was no response. The soldiers then began climbing the rocks. But the pirates were not to be seen.

"They must be hiding in one of those caves!"

The general made ten of his soldiers stand guard on the rocks. He divided the remaining forty into eight groups of five each and ordered them to search the caves.

Samir and his friends stood on the boat, looking at the whole operation with curiosity and anxiety.

"Samir!"

The familiar and dear voice

surprised Samir. He looked in its direction. On a small rock stood Apurva.

"The pirates are hiding in the tunnel at the eastern end of the island. Ask the general not to waste time, but to explore the tunnel," advised Apurva, before disappearing.

A delighted Samir jumped on to the island and caught up with the general.

"My boy! Didn't I ask you to remain on the boat?" the general chided affectionately.

"Yes, sir, you did. But I've a precious clue for you. The pirates must be hiding in the tunnel at the eastern end of the island. Be







quick!" said Samir.

"How did you know?"

"In the same way we had found the treasure and escaped from the pirates!"

The general realised that what Samir was saying would not be nonsense. He led two groups of his soldiers to the tunnel identified by Samir. On reaching its mouth, he roared, "You, pirates! We've located you. Would you surrender or would you prefer to die?"

"Whoever enters the tunnel shall die!" roared back the chief of the pirates.

But to their horror, the pirates heard a strange voice right inside the cave. "If you linger here for

another minute, you'll all meet with bitter death. This tunnel is the home of the most ferocious cobras known to man!"

But what terrified the pirates more than the cobras was the voice itself. Who was speaking? How could any human being be there? It must be some spirit. The darkness of the tunnel now appeared doubly dark.

"Let's surrender!" said the chief. One by one they came out of the tunnel. They raised their arms as they slowly advanced towards the general. The soldiers easily tied their hands.

(To continue)

Some folks are wise, and some are otherwise.

Worry is the interest we pay on trouble before it is due.

LEAVES FROM THE LIVES OF THE GREAT

RULES ARE FOR EVERYONE

Long before Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru became free India's first Prime Minister, he was the Municipal Chairman of Allahabad. One day, he was attending office when the Tax Superintendent of the Water Works Department called on him. Placing a sheet of paper before him, the official said, "Sir, here's a list of people who haven't paid the water tax before the due date. According to the rules, their water supply has to be disconnected. Shall we go ahead?"

"Why do you have to ask me?" remarked Pandit Nehru. "The rule is clear; you may go by it."

"But, sir, some of them are very respectable citizens," said the Superintendent, hesitantly.

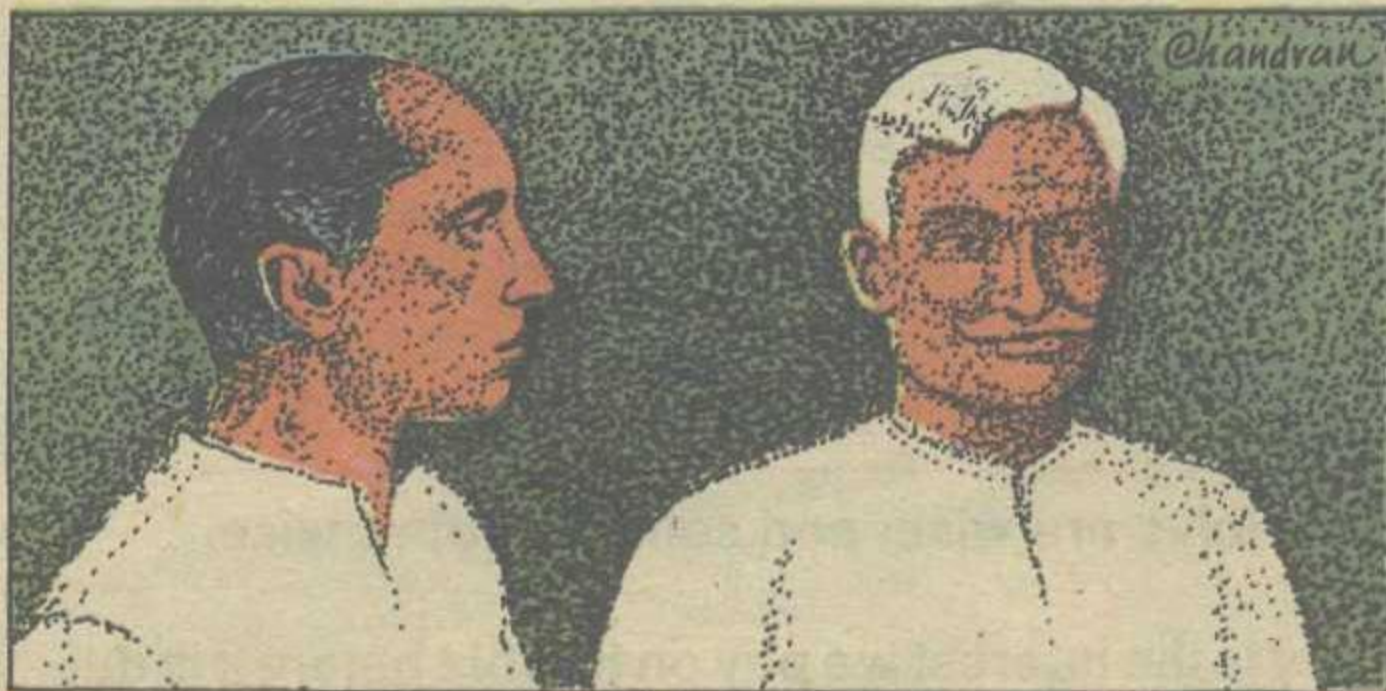
"So what?" Panditji almost shouted. "The rules are for everyone, and they have to be imposed without any discrimination," he added firmly.

The very next day, water supply was disconnected, and predictably there was a hue and cry. The persons affected included such dignitaries as the Chief Justice and the Inspector General of Police. Allahabad's leading lawyer, Motilal Nehru, was also among the defaulters!

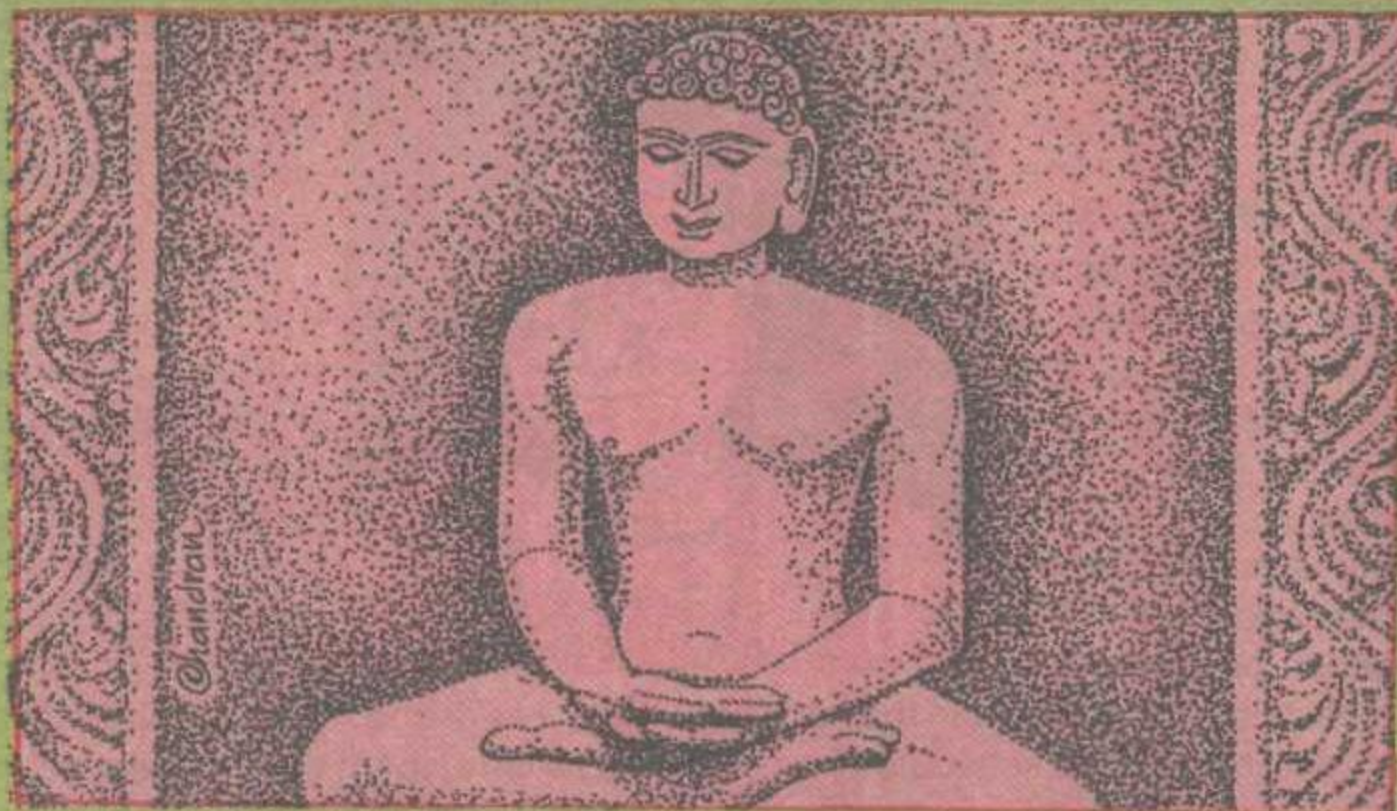
Motilal protested. "The Municipality should have given notice, before disconnecting the supply," he told his son.

Jawaharlal reminded his father, politely, "It is the duty of the citizens to pay the taxes in time. I cannot help when the rules are clear and specific."

No wonder, Motilal was all praise for his son's impartiality.



CHANDAMAMA SUPPLEMENT-37



DEITIES OF INDIA

MAHAVIRA JINA

There was a great religious tradition in ancient India which came to be known as Jainism. The Master who popularised it is Mahavira Jina. He lived in the 6th century B.C.

He was born in a royal family at Vaishali. He renounced the worldly life at the age of thirty and followed the path shown by twenty-three religious teachers before him. They were known as the Tirthankaras. Mahavira, whose earlier name was Vardha-

mana, became the twenty-fourth Tirthankara.

Mahavira taught how to practise complete non-violence in life and how to achieve Nirvana or freedom from the cycle of birth and death. He is worshipped as a deity in Jain temples, his body shown in golden colour and in meditative posture.

The other Tirthankaras, too, are worshipped as deities. Old and new Jain temples can be seen all over India.

YOUNGEST NOVELIST

If you go to a bookshop around next Christmas, look for the title, "The Diary of a Seventh Grader". Someone, who was herself in the Seventh Grade two years ago, finished writing the manuscript during the summer vacation, after which her father prepared the typescript, and it is now in the hands of a publisher. He has scheduled it as one of his Xmas releases.

Thirteen-year-old Nayantara Noorani is now in the Ninth Grade in the P.E.C. High School in Karachi. She is very popular among children in Pakistan; whenever she is seen in public, she is mobbed for her autograph. She is currently the youngest author in Pakistan, having written her first novel when she was 11; it was published by the time she turned 12. And all this happened by sheer accident!

A well-known publishing firm in Karachi approached her mother—an English teacher and writer—for a novel for children. Nayantara overheard her mother excusing herself, saying she would not find time. Without telling anybody at home, the



girl picked up a sheet of paper and started writing a story she had had in mind.

Nayantara sent the half-written manuscript secretly to the publisher. The next day the telephone rang. It was the 10-year-old daughter of the publisher. Could

she read the rest of the story? Nayantara spent the next few days in completing the novel and sent it across to the publisher. Titled "A Dream Come True", it tells the story of a little girl who runs away from her step-mother, joins a circus, and is ultimately united with her real mother. Nayantara was an instant celebrity after the book came out.

She tops her class, with mathematics and physics as her favourite subjects, and manages to spare some time to pursue her writing hobby. Her 16-year-old sister lends her ideas; 10-year-old brother helps her with proof-reading; and her father acts as her typist. A journalist, he sometimes takes liberty in making changes in the manuscript while typing! And arguments between father and daughter over such changes are not infrequent.

DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which newspaper has the largest circulation in the world?
2. For ancient Romans, owls symbolised disaster. What did bees stand for?
3. Which is the most popular song in English language?
4. Born in Kerala, this ancient mathematician was educated in Takshashila. Who was he? What is he famous for?
5. Madame Bhikaiji Cama is credited with designing the Indian tricolour. A woman designed the American flag. Who was she?
6. In whose honour was India's first ever stamp on a Soviet theme?
7. Queen Victoria of England and Peter the Great of Russia called on a great inventor. Who was he? What was his invention?
8. Esther Cleveland of the U.S.A. has a unique distinction. What is it?
9. An American President remained a bachelor till the end of his term. Who was he?
10. What was the highest temperature ever recorded on earth? When? Where?
11. And the lowest temperature?
12. What was the worst natural calamity ever recorded?

ANSWERS

1. Yomiuri Shimbun from Japan—founded in 1874.
2. Good fortune. Bees were considered messengers of the gods.
3. *Happy Birthday to You*, composed by Mildred Patty Hill in 1936.
4. Aryabhata. He discovered the ratio between the circumference of a circle and its diameter, 'pi', mathematically calculated as 3.14159.
5. Betsy Ross of Philadelphia. She used to stitch women's dresses.
6. Maxim Gorky. The stamp was issued in 1968.
7. Anton Leeuwenhoek—the microscope.
8. He is the only child born in the White House. His father, Grover Cleveland, was the President then.
9. James Buchanan. After him came Abraham Lincoln.
10. 57.8°C on September 13, 1922, in Aziza in North Africa.
11. -88.3°C on August 29, 1960, in Vostokshouid, Antarctica.
12. In 1931, Huang Ho river in China was in floods, taking the lives of 37 lakhs.

NEWS FLASH

Family Get-together



Can you imagine a family of 700, and all of them living? The Kosani Veedu family of Kuttichira, near Calicut in Kerala, has earned an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. This 'jumbo' family has a history dating back to the 18th century. The oldest member of this Muslim family is a 90-year-old woman, Cheriya Ayishabi, who has four children. Their children and relatives number another 680.

For the last few years, all of them have been punctually assembling for a get-together on August 15. As no camera can catch them in a single shot, only group photos are taken, of the adult males, females, and children separately! The family follows a democratic tradition of electing the head (Karnavar). The present incumbent, Ahammad Koya (75), was unanimously elected 33 years ago.

Tenth Planet?

It looks as though we can add one more member to the planet 'family' of nine. Three months ago, some British scientists revealed their having discovered a planet-sized body beyond the known solar system. It is ten times the earth in size, and revolves round a parent star in an orbit two-thirds the size of earth's orbit around the sun. The parent star, the scientists have found, is sending a regular radio pulse every third second, at 1400 Mega Hertz frequency, which can be heard with the help of a powerful radio telescope. If your hobby is astronomy, you can locate the star, named PSR 1829-10, in the constellation of Scutum, near the Sagittarius group. Has the planet any life? Unlikely, say the scientists.





VEER HANUMAN

14

(Sita is overcome with revulsion on listening to Ravana's pleading to become his wife. She warns him of doom if he does not return her to Rama. He asks the demonesses guarding Sita to advise her. They even threaten to kill her. One of them, Trijata, cautions them and narrates her dream of Ravana's end at the hands of Rama and destruction of Lanka. Hanuman hears everything from his perch and decides to make his appearance to Sita, who tells him of her abduction by Ravana.)

Hanuman listened to Sita with rapt attention and tried to console her. "O Mother! I'm here at the bidding of Sri Rama. All is well with him. And brother Lakshmana has sent his respectful regards."

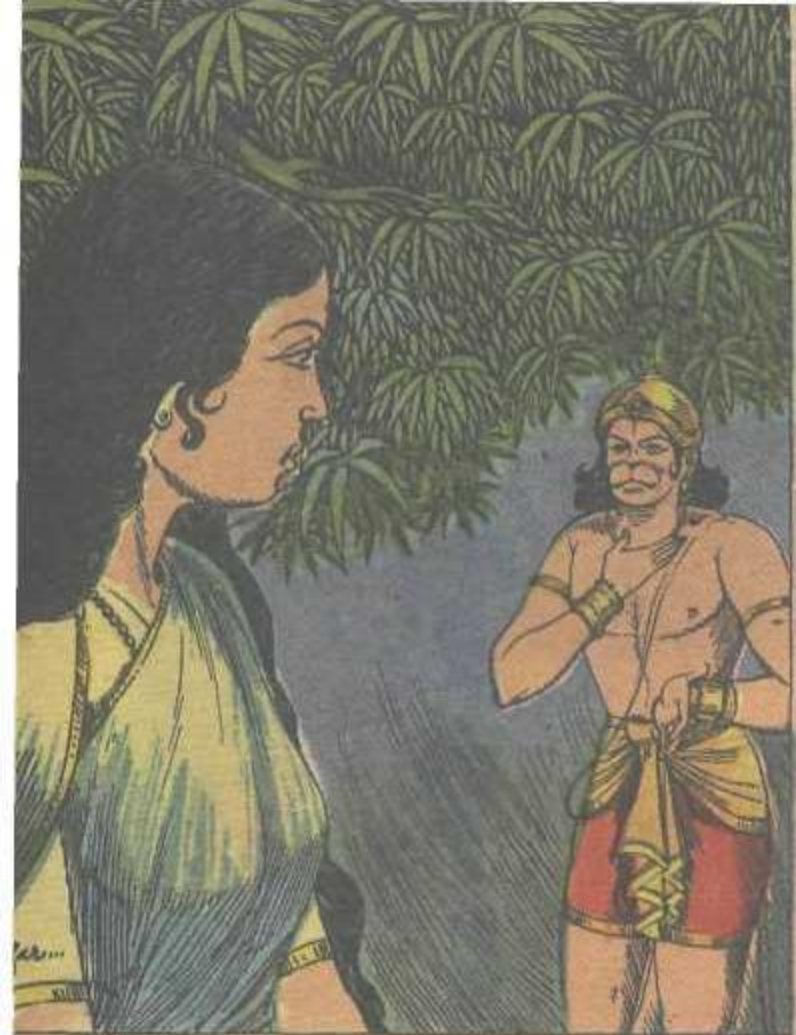
The very mention of the two names so dear to her was soothing to Sita. However, she was beset with a misgiving: Could the stranger be Ravana himself, now

disguised as a Vanara? Was he trying yet another trick on her?

Hanuman saw the shadow of fright on Sita's face and could guess what was on her mind. Approaching her slowly, he prostrated before her. Still Sita was not convinced that he was someone other than Ravana. With a sigh she said, "If you're Ravana in disguise, know for certain that your trick will fail. I

AN INCIDENT REVEALED





haven't forgotten the way you deceived me by your disguise in Panchavati. If, however, you're truly Sri Rama's messenger, then let me hear more about him from you."

All the while, Sita had also a feeling that she was perhaps dreaming. Hanuman did not want to prolong her doubt and anxiety; so he showed her the ring Rama had given him. When Sita held the ring on her palm, her eyes welled with tears of joy. Hanuman went on narrating the glory and greatness of Sri Rama. He also told her all about Rama's friendship with Sugriva, the

Vanaras spreading out in search of her, and of his own exciting journey of Lanka.

Sita now looked reassured and very happy. Hanuman asked her, "Mother, now that I've found out where you're being kept, please tell me what I should do next. For, I must return soon and inform Sri Rama about the success of my mission."

Sita said, composedly, "Ravana has given me a year's time to take a decision. Sri Rama will have to hurry up and come to my rescue before the year ends. In fact, even Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, advised him to restore me to Sri Rama. But he seems to be adamant."

Hanuman was surprised. "Is that so? Can there be some wise men among demons, too? Ravana ought to have heeded the advice of his brother."

"All this I came to know from Trijata, daughter of Vibhishana," said Sita.

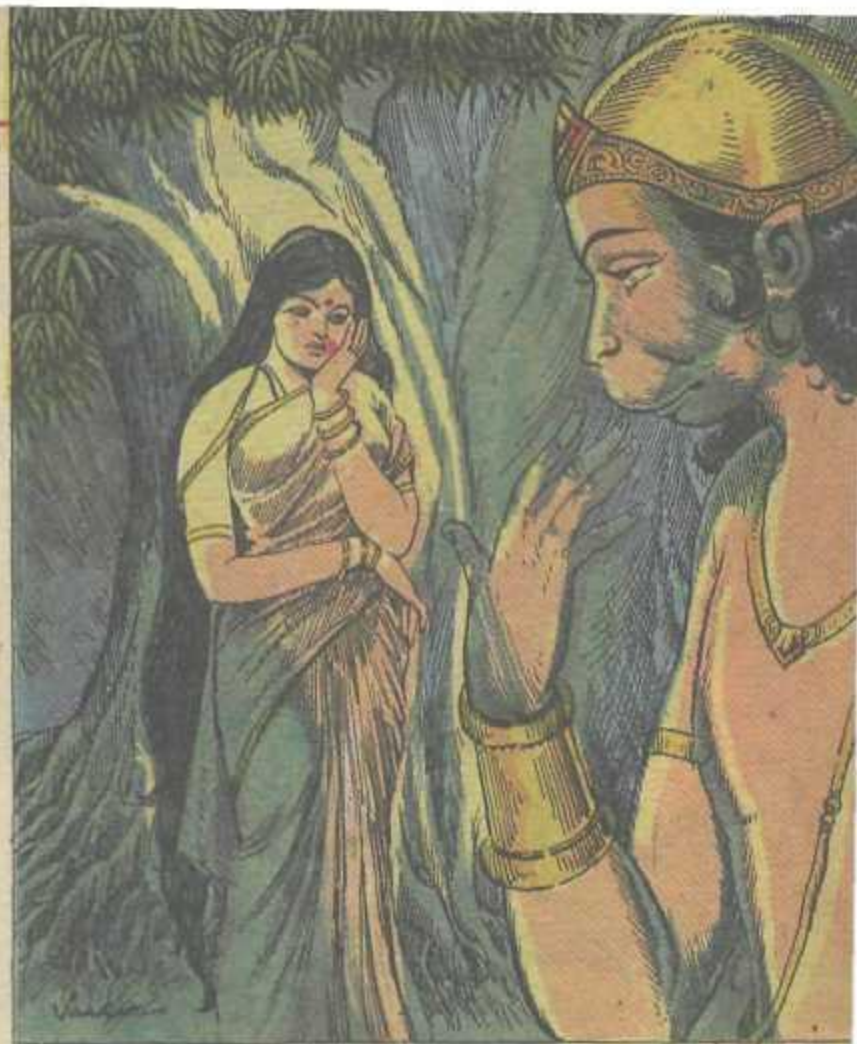
"Mother! If he comes to know that you're here, Sri Rama would lose no time in gathering an army of Vanaras and invading Lanka," Hanuman assured her. "But, Mother, if you're eager to return to Sri Rama, you can get on to

my shoulders and I shall carry you straight to my lord. Don't you harbour any doubt about my capability to cross the ocean with you on my shoulders. For that matter, I can even uproot this whole island and throw it in front of Sri Rama!"

Being a chaste woman, Sita would not approve of such an act. "No, I won't go with you. It's for my husband to come here and take me back. I should not even touch another person," said Sita Devi. "Hanuman! It was wonderful of you to have leapt across the ocean and entered Lanka, crossing all hurdles on the way, but how can you repeat the feat with someone sitting on your shoulders?" Sita smiled.

Hanuman said, "Mother, perhaps you've no idea of my strength and power. Just watch me!" He then stepped back and began enlarging his body. Sita was amazed to find Hanuman going up to the height of a small mountain. She now could believe his words that he was capable of uprooting the whole of Lanka.

Hanuman soon resumed his usual size and once again stood before Sita with bowed head. "Have you any more doubt left,



Mother?" asked Hanuman very humbly. "I suggest, let's hurry to meet Rama and Lakshmana and gladden their hearts."

"Hanuman! I've no doubt about your capability," said Sita Devi, and went on to remind him, "but if I escape with you, the mission Sri Rama is to accomplish will not be fulfilled. Ravana had kidnapped me; if Rama, too, were to take me back by stealth with the help of a messenger, wouldn't that affect his greatness, his prestige? The arrogant demons must be taught a lesson. Besides, it might be risky for me to go with you. When you rise to





the sky, I might get frightened and fall down. If some demons follow you, you might have to fight them, and you would find it difficult to protect me and fight with them at the same time. Your duty is clear: you must go and inform everything to Sri Rama. Let my husband come and take me with him. Tell him that I shall be anxiously awaiting his triumphant arrival."

Hanuman now felt that Sita was absolutely right. "Mother, let it be as you wish. But give me something that would convince Sri Rama that I've really met you."

Sita thought for a while and then said, "Hanuman, I don't have anything I can give you like that. I shall, however, narrate an incident and he'll know that you've heard it from me."

"One day we both were resting on the banks of Ganga. Rama had placed his head on my lap and was asleep. Suddenly, a crow came flying and pecked at me and I began bleeding. A drop of blood fell on his face and he woke up. Furious at the sight, he plucked a blade of grass, chanted a *mantra*, charged it with occult power, and shot it like an arrow at the crow. The arrow went after the crow, which was actually the son of Lord Indra. Nobody gave him a refuge. Ultimately, the crow had to come back to Rama, seeking his pardon and protection. Since the arrow had to discharge the commands contained in the *mantra*, the crow had to sacrifice its right eye for the sake of its life. This fact is known only to Sri Rama and me. So, if you were to narrate this to him, he will be convinced that you did meet me."

"Mother! I shall do as you bid. You can imagine how much sorrow Sri Rama might be suffer-



ing now. I undertook this hazardous journey only to give him solace and happiness. I shall request him to invade Lanka as soon as possible. I'm sure he'll destroy Ravana and rescue you," said Hanuman confidently.

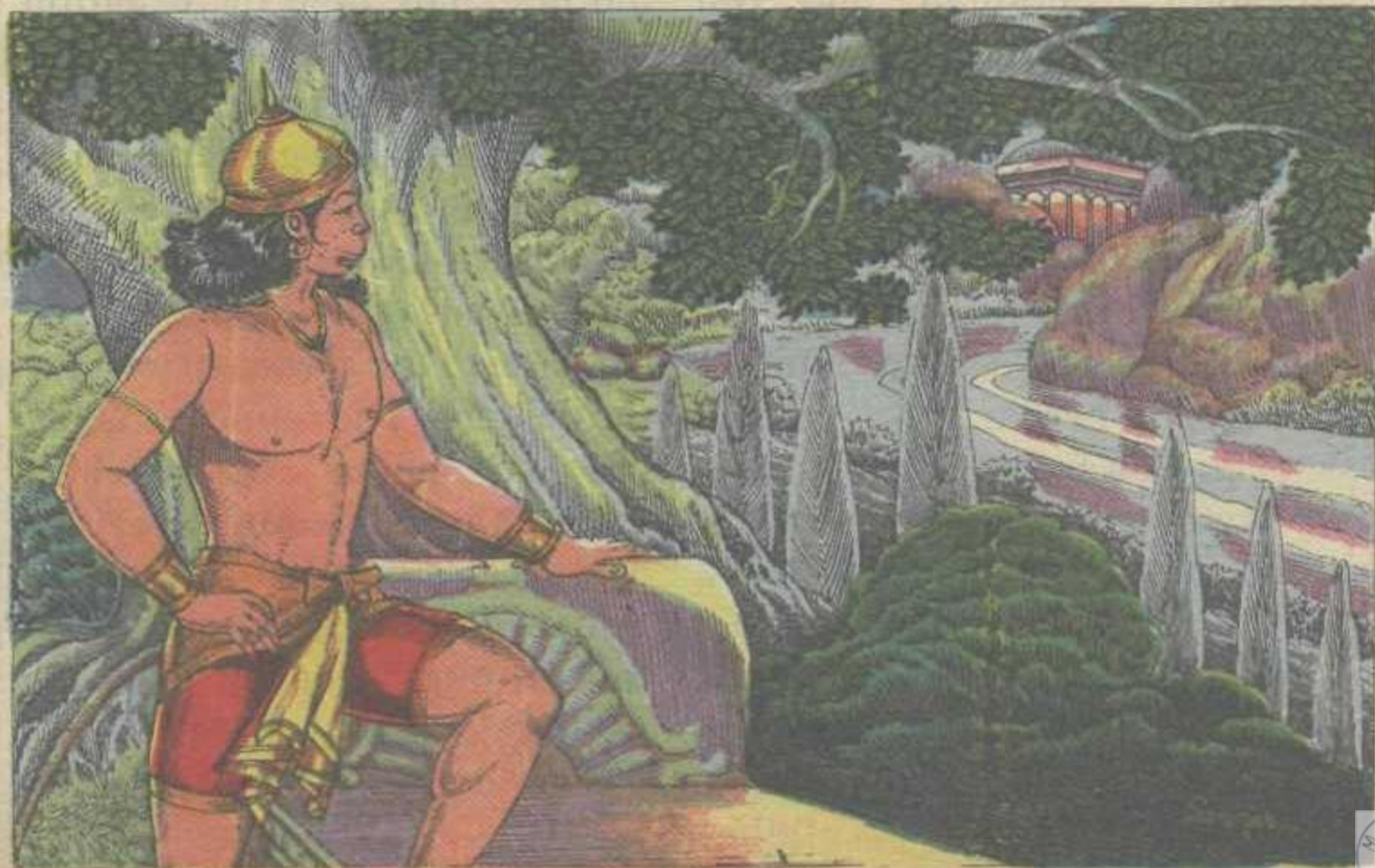
"Hanuman! Go back and convey my respectful feelings to my husband, Rama. How can I forget Lakshmana who sacrificed all his comforts in order to serve his brother? Give him my good wishes," said Sita with affection. She then untied from her sari a small piece of ornament that she once used to wear on her hair. "Hand this over to Rama. It will remind him of the happy days I

spent in the palace at Ayodhya."

Hanuman took the ornament from Sita with reverence. He then went round Sita thrice with bowed head and stood before her with folded hands.

"Now everything depends on you all, Hanuman," said Sita with a sigh. "I shall be anxiously awaiting the day when my torment and torture will end."

"I shall get back to Sri Rama and tell him everything. Don't despair, Mother!" assured Hanuman. "Sri Rama will reach Lanka soon with the Vanara army of Sugriva. Nobody will be able to vanquish Rama. Please have faith."





A doubt still lurked in Sita's mind. "You've exceptional strength, Hanuman, and you were able to cross the ocean. But will Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, and others be able to do the same?"

Hanuman smiled, "Mother, you've nothing to worry on that score. Amongst us Vanaras, there are heroes who possess greater power and valour than I. Everything will turn out all right. Now, please bless me and let me go."

Sita blessed him and remained straining her eyes till Hanuman disappeared among the bushes

and trees. He had not gone far when a thought struck him. "Should I leave the place before testing the strength of the demons? How can I engage them in a fight?"

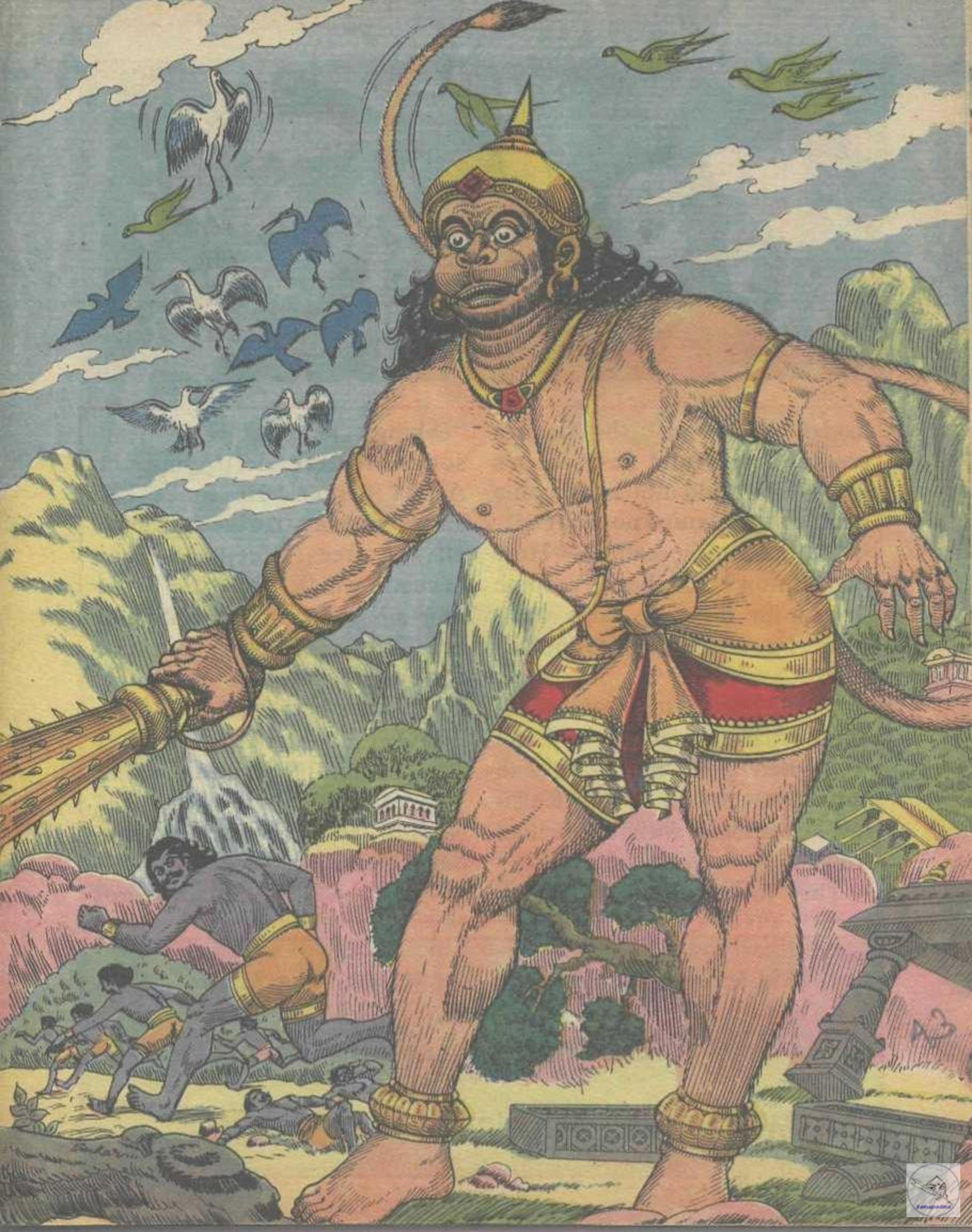
As he was walking, he came upon the lovely garden full of Asoka trees. The way it had been tended assured Hanuman that the garden must be a favourite haunt of Ravana. The Vanara hero thought that the demons might be provoked if he were to destroy the garden, and they might come to fight with him.

Hanuman began uprooting the trees and other plants and throwing them hither and thither. He did not spare even the beautiful fountains and cottages meant for amusement. The birds which had their homes in the garden tittered and flew away. In no time was the garden reduced to ruins.

He went and stood at the entrance to the garden in wait for the demons. The sound of falling trees and pillars and the shrill cries of the birds soon alerted the demonesses staying around the Asoka garden. They rushed to find a huge monkey guarding what was once a garden.

The demonesses went and







asked Sita, "Who's this strange creature? How did he make his way? He would not have come here without your knowledge."

Sita said quite calmly, "How do I know? Maybe he's some demon in disguise as is their wont. I'm scared even to look at him!"

The demonesses now wondered what he might do to them. They fled from the place and some of them rushed into Ravana's chambers with a terrified look.

They told him, voice choked,

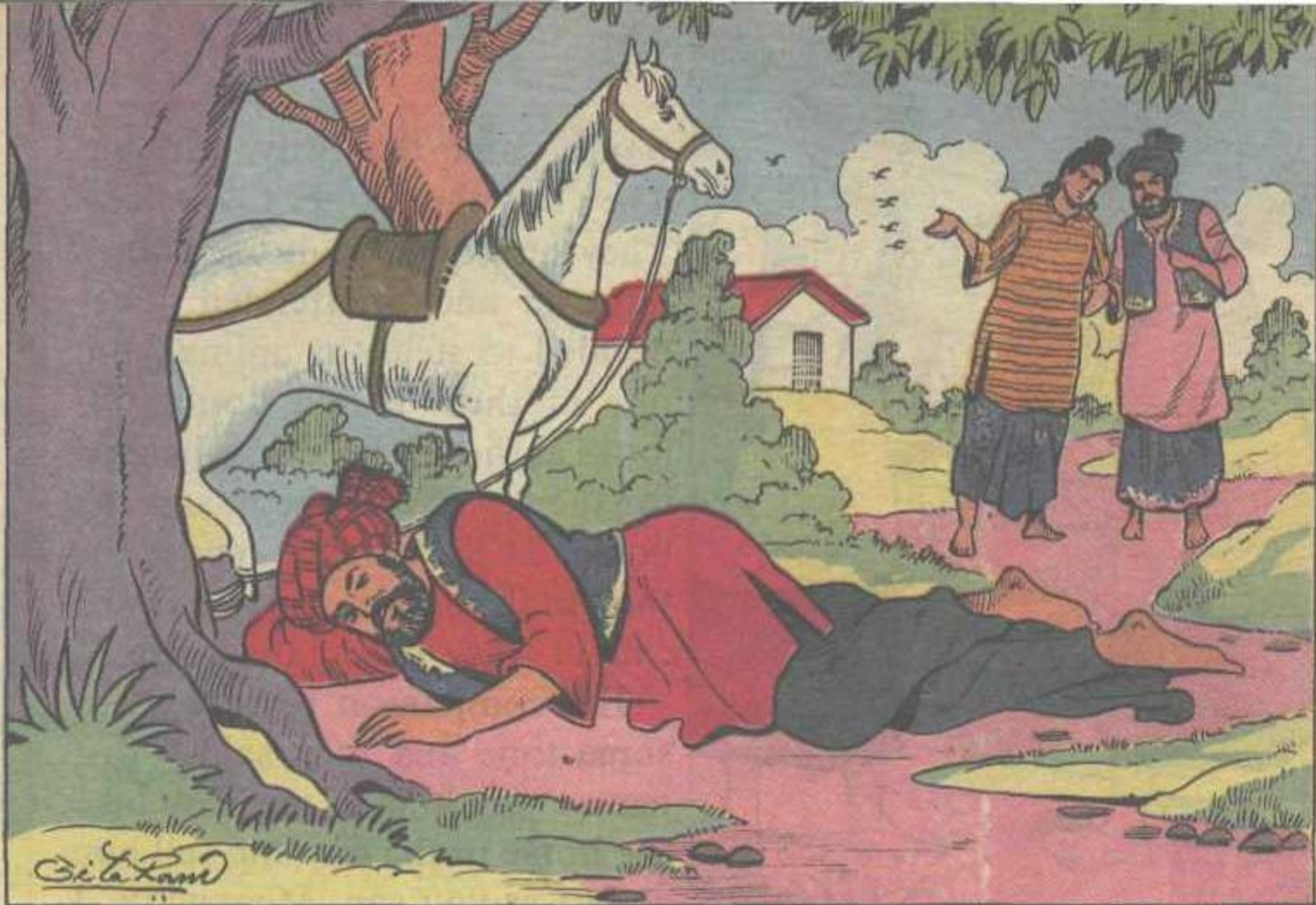
"O king! There's a strange, fearsome creature destroying the Asoka garden. He looks like a huge monkey. He has uprooted all the trees except the one beneath which Sita sits. Some time ago, we saw him talking to her. We asked her, but she declines to say who he is. He might have been sent by Rama. Look at his audacity! He met Sita without your permission. You must capture him and punish him, before he creates more havoc to Lanka."

(To continue)

It is foolish to carry timber to the wood.

A used plough shines; standing water stinks.

Rather an egg today than a hen tomorrow.



THE LIGHTER SIDE

NAUGHTY AGAIN?

Pratap Singh was a farmer. He owned a piece of land, where he cultivated wheat. He toiled on the farm so much that he always got a good yield. He kept a part of the crop for himself and family, and whatever he had in excess was usually taken to the market and sold.

He invariably visited the market once a month, when he would take his horse-cart out, so that his wife and two children could also go with him. They used to wait for this day eagerly

and enjoyed the outing very much—not so much for the goodies that he bought for them, but more for the ride to the city.

Pratap Singh was fond of his dark brown horse, Bahadur. As his son and daughter were too young to ride on the horse themselves, the next best thing for them was this long drive to the city, when they would take hold of the reins by turns and coax the horse to run fast. But Bahadur would never oblige them, lest the horse, the cart, and its passengers were involved in



any mishap. Nevertheless the children took joy in prompting him, sometimes even provoking him with the whip.

One day, Pratap Singh had some urgent work in the city and he decided to ride on Bahadur without the cart. He rode fast, but it was a hot summer's day, and he soon felt tired. He also wanted to give Bahadur a rest. As soon as he saw a huge shady tree by the side of the country road, he got down from the horse, tied it to the tree, and himself lay down for a short nap. But soon he was sound asleep.

A little while later, two vaga-

bonds came that way, walking. They saw the farmer fast asleep. They also saw the horse simply tethered and unattended. They decided to steal the animal. But one of them had a doubt. "It looks as though he, too, is headed for the city. When he misses the horse, he'll certainly report the theft to the police, and we may be caught while selling the horse."

His companion pondered for some time and then said, "Just leave everything to me. You take the horse to the city and sell him as fast as you can. Meanwhile, I shall take the place of the horse. Here, you give me a hand to unbridle him," he added confidently.

"What'll you tell the farmer when he wakes up?" asked the other fellow.

"I've a plan," said the first man. "Don't worry. Let's not waste a moment!"

The two thieves acted fast, but silently. One of them untied the horse, while the other removed the bridle from the horse, noiselessly. The other fellow led away the horse on foot, as without the bridle, he was unable to ride on the horse. By the time he and the horse were out of sight, the



vagabond who remained there managed to slip the bridle over his head and stood on his fours grandfather-like, ready to play 'horse' with his grandchildren!

Soon the farmer woke up. He turned on one side to see what Bahadur was doing. He rubbed his eyes: where's the horse? He turned on the other side and saw a man on his fours wearing Bahadur's bridle. Horror of horrors! The human horse was speaking!

"Have no fear, my master," said the thief, who had the bridle on and was tied to the tree.

"Eh! Eh! Who are you?" stut-tered Pratap Singh, bewildered.

"I was your horse for several years," said the thief, sighs interjecting his speech, "but before that I was a man, as I am now, once again. I'm ashamed to tell you, but because of my evil ways, god condemned me to lead the life of a horse, as a penance."

"That's terrible," said Pratap Singh, pityingly. After all, Bahadur had been a hard-working, loyal animal and he had grown a liking for him. "But what awful things did you do to anger the Almighty to change you into an animal?" he was curious to know.

"I was once a holy priest," narrated the man, still on his



fours. "But my heart was not pure. I was given to drinks and gambling. I robbed the poor of whatever little money they had, and I had scant respect for women."

"Little wonder the Lord condemned you, Bahadur," remarked Pratap Singh. "You really deserved the punishment."

"Yes, but god has forgiven me for my sins," said the thief in a reassuring tone. "You've been so kind to me, my master. I'm sure you, too, will pardon me."

"Of course," agreed the farmer, unmindful of the loss of a horse he might have to bear. After all, a human being could not substitute for a horse. "Yes, I give you your freedom. You may go."

The thief now stood upright, handed the bridle to Pratap Singh, thanked him profusely, and left the place in a hurry. He

soon joined his companion and was happy to be told that the horse had been sold for a bargain.

Meanwhile, Pratap Singh trudged his way, carrying the heavy bridle in one hand. On reaching the city, he searched for a stable where he could buy a horse. The owner took him inside and showed him his horses, among which was a brown animal. "He's a handsome steed. I got him only today."

Pratap Singh had no difficulty in recognising the horse. But he was surprised. "Bahadur!" he exclaimed. "So, you were up to your mischiefs again! And so soon!"

But the farmer did not forsake his favourite horse. He paid the price mentioned by the stable owner, strapped the bridle on to Bahadur, and rode away.



Chandru



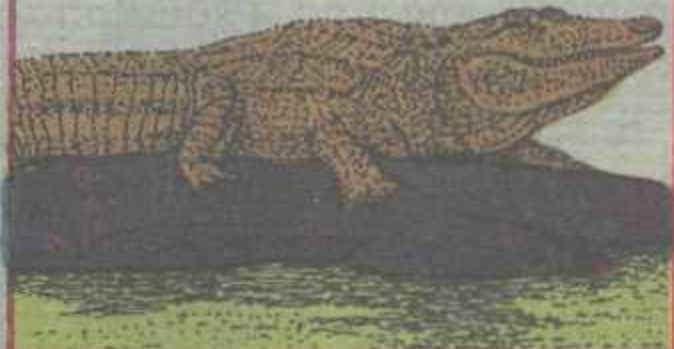
In Kangaroo Country

That herbivorous animal peculiar to Australia, the kangaroo has short forelimbs and rather long hind-legs, enabling them to take giant leaps. The largest species among them will have a head the size of the sheep's, and may stretch up to a height of 7 feet (213m). There are smaller-sized kangaroos too, the smallest of them not bigger than a rabbit.

Crocodile tears

When a man kills and eats another man, he is called a cannibal. Animals seldom come under that category—except, of course, crocodiles. When they do, can we expect them to shed tears? Crocodile tears are not real tears; they are only glandular excretions that help them to expel excess salt from their eyes.

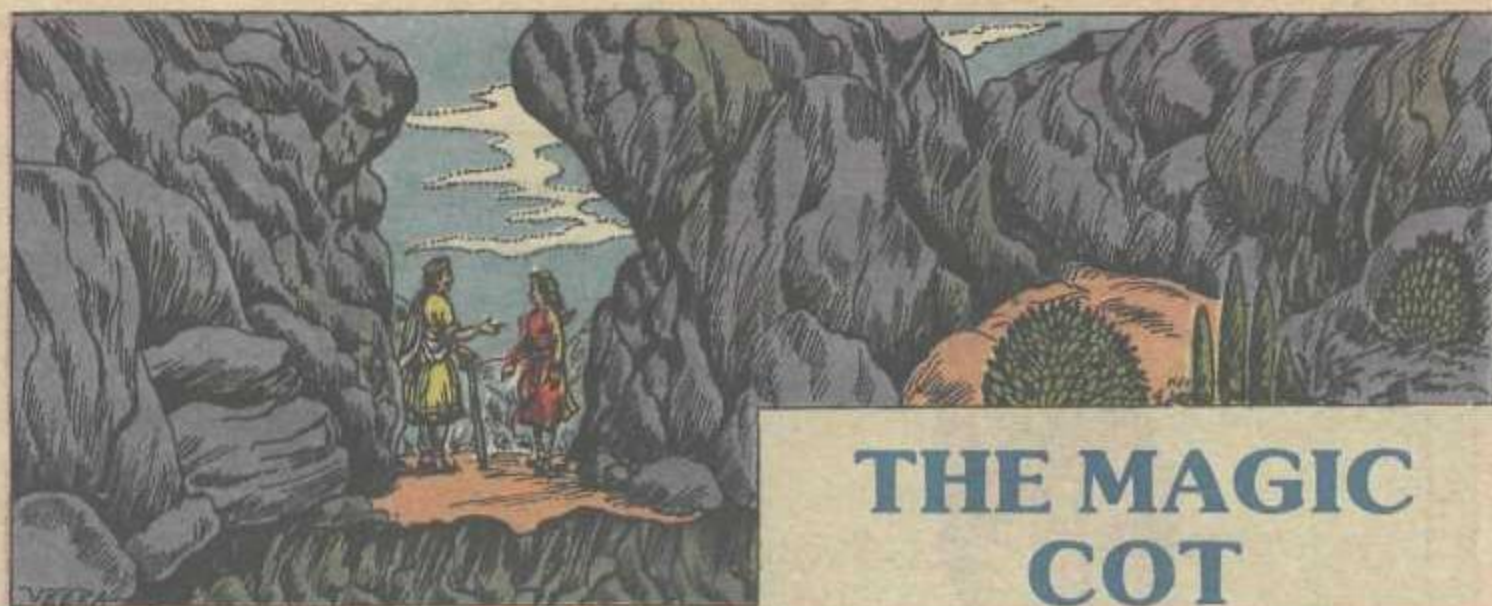
Chandru



Snake's 'ears'

Ever watched a snake-charmer any time? That the snake dances to his tunes is a myth. If he were to hold his pipe still, the snake would not dance at all. It would only sway to the clever swaying of the pipe by the charmer. The truth is, the snake does not have ears. But its tongue can pick up sound vibrations. We can thus say, the snake 'hears' with its tongue!





THE MAGIC COT

Kamalasimhan was the King of Kantapura. He was broad-minded, caring for the welfare of his subjects. He used to go round the kingdom incognito, so as to understand the people's problems and find a solution to every one of them.

In fact, he was only following the practice prevailing among rulers in those days. All of them had a sense of responsibility, and this was one method by which they could ensure that the people experienced no difficulties in life. Moreover, such wanderings in disguise helped them detect antisocial elements and their movements and activities and take action at the appropriate time. Thieves and murderers did not dare come out in the open, nor could they attempt anything covertly because the rulers would have

taken all precautions. This put the ministers and other officials always on their alert, lest they were found wanting at any time. Small wonder, then, the rulers were popular with the people.

Kamalasimhan was out one night dressed like a common man. He was roaming in the mountainous region of his kingdom, when suddenly he came to a dead-end in the valley. He was wondering which way he should go when there came a giant of a man, tall, hefty and strong. He was clad in silks and carried a heavy lathi. He appeared to be a respectable person, though fearsome to look at.

"Who're you?" the man asked Kamalasimhan, who was looking like a commoner. "You look tired. You must have been walking for a long time. You can't



proceed further; the path ends here. I suggest, you come home with me, eat a sumptuous meal, and rest till tomorrow morning. Shall I add, a comfortable cot awaits you at my home? You can return to your village tomorrow."

The king was really taken by the man's cordial invitation. How could he refuse it? So, he agreed to go with him, and the two started walking. They had gone only a short distance when they heard footsteps coming in their direction. "Stay back," the man said, "let me go and find out what's happening."

They were a group of traders, returning from the city. "Where're you going in the dead of night?" asked the man. "I suggest you all come home with me and take rest till morning. It may not be safe to travel in the night."

While the traders were talking to him, Kamalasimhan spent time walking up and down when he saw an old man straining himself to heave a bundle of firewood on to his head. He helped him tie the load into two, so that he could carry them on both his shoulders. During their



conversation, Kamalasimhan told him of the invitation that he had accepted.

"So, you too have fallen for his honeyed words!" the old man exclaimed. "You don't know him. He's more cruel than even a demon. He's a real trickster. That cot of his is a magical one. Don't sleep on it even if you go with him," he cautioned Kamalasimhan.

"Everything appears very strange," said Kamalasimhan. "Please tell me more about him."

The old man then narrated the story of Vakrahету. The name



fitted him as there was a crooked twist to everything about him. He had become cruel, because he was crazy about finding an easy method to produce gold. Towards that, he started worshipping the goddess of the demons. It was She who gave him that cot, asking him to sacrifice whoever could lie on the cot properly without touching the two ends, so as to propitiate Her.

Vakrahetu took the cot home and built a palatial house for it. He would wait outside and whenever anybody came, he would invite them to his house. If

he found the person was short for the cot, he would tease him, and if he were to find the person too long for the cot, he would cut the limbs and inflict other injuries, too. Vakrahetu could not find anyone to fit the cot, except of course 'he himself, said the old man with a sigh.

Kamalasimhan was full of pity for him. "Why didn't he then sacrifice you to the goddess?" he asked, full of curiosity.

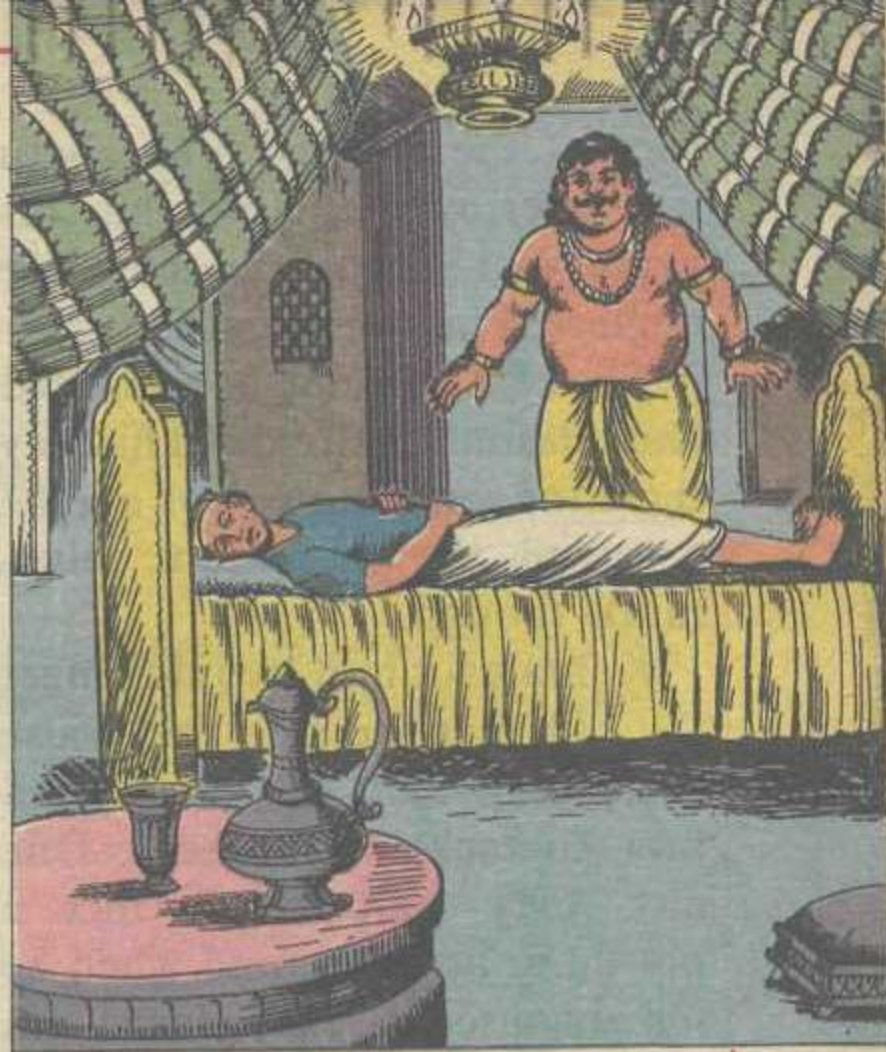
"How I escaped is another story," said the old man. "One day I came this way, just as you did. He accosted me and took me home. After a meal, he showed me the cot and asked me to rest on it. It was too short for me and I had to draw my legs. It was uncomfortable. After some time, I changed sides and lo and behold! I could now stretch my legs fully. Immediately I knew it was a magic cot. I couldn't get any sleep, but I pretended to be asleep. A while later, Vakrahetu peeped into the room. He must have been overjoyed because, from the next day onwards, he showed a special regard and respect for me, persuaded me to stay with him, and fed me very well. I managed to find all



about his motive and was very guarded.

"The night before the sacrifice, he came in to find out whether I was lying down properly on the cot. As I had become wise of him, I had once again changed sides and was lying down legs drawn! He was naturally stupefied. Evidently, he had brought the cot in a hurry before the goddess could tell him of its magical powers of which, I knew, he was not aware. He began questioning me, but I professed ignorance. He tried every method to extract the secret from me. When he knew he had failed, he turned against me and started abusing me, mentally and physically. He's now treating me like a slave and I've to do all chores for him, like cleaning the house, washing his clothes, and collecting firewood from the forest. He has not given me my freedom in the hope that one day I may give out the secret. Meanwhile, he's continuing his search for someone who would fit the cot."

King Kamalashimhan realised that he had come upon valuable information which he could make use of for bringing great



relief to unwary travellers coming that way. By then, Vakrahetu had led the traders to where Kamalashimhan was waiting and they all started for Vakrahetu's house. Without his master noticing it, the old man managed to whisper something into Kamalashimhan's ears.

After they reached Vakrahetu's abode, he offered the cot to Kamalashimhan, who excused himself saying he was not used to sleeping on cots. However, Vakrahetu insisted that he should not be sleeping on the floor. Kamalashimhan then managed to keep the pillow at the



foot of the cot and Vakrahetu was overjoyed to find that his guest just fitted the cot. He neglected his other guests.

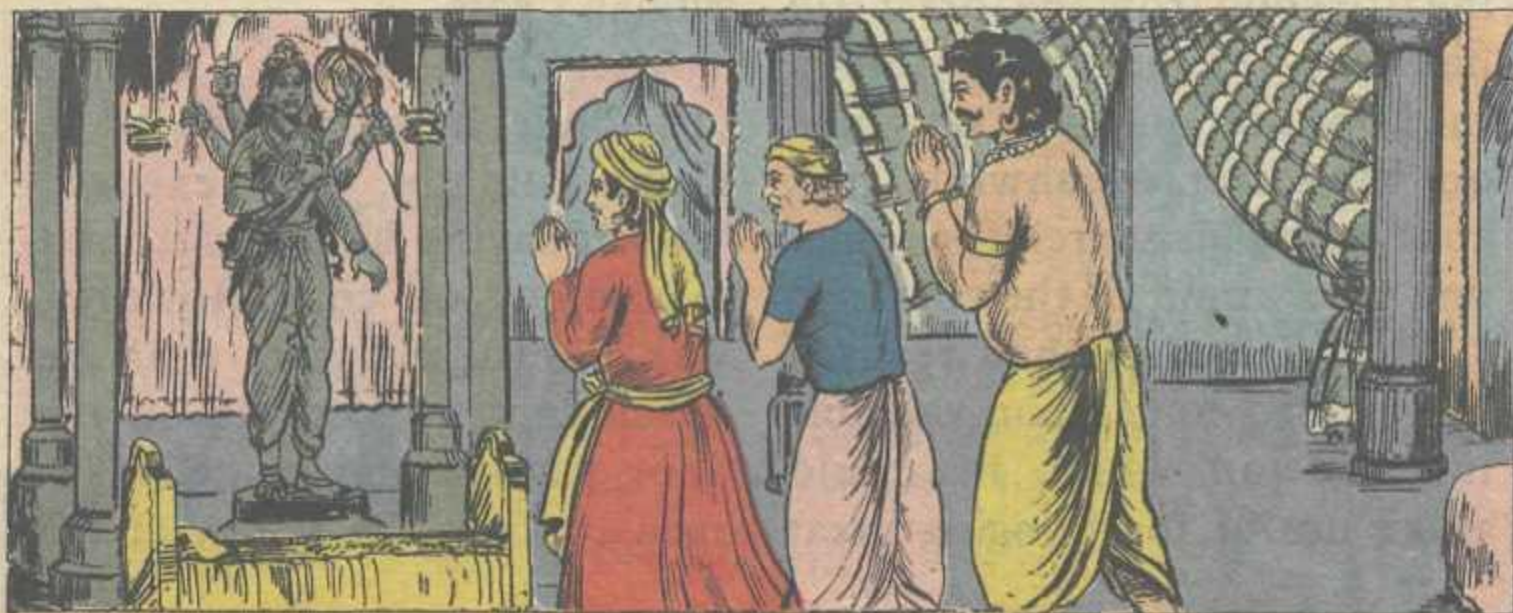
The next morning he requested Kamalasinghan to extend his stay there for some more days and he accepted the invitation, reluctantly though.

Kamalasinghan would meet the old man outside the house every day and they conspired how to tackle Vakrahetu. One day, they managed to mix a potion in his food, and when he fell unconscious, they placed him on the cot from the wrong side. They then carried the cot to the temple and were about to sacrifice him to the goddess when She appeared before them. "Leave him alone," She said, "he's my devotee. I shall take away the

powers I had already given him and turn him into an ordinary person. But, I'm pleased with you," She said to Kamalasinghan. "I shall give you the secret of producing gold. You can use it for the welfare of your subjects." After giving him the *mantra*, the goddess disappeared.

The king took the old man along with him and made him an attendant in the palace. He converted the palatial house of Vakrahetu into a resting-place for weary travellers.

Poor Vakrahetu! When he woke up from his slumber, he found everybody gone. The cot, too. He went out and roamed the forest aimlessly. He now regretted how he was crooked in thought and action. But there was no retribution for him.



WORLD OF SPORT

THE FASTEST SPRINT

Minutes before he went for the line-up for the 100m race at the World Athletic Championships in Tokyo late last August, Carl Lewis (U.S.A.) woke up from a nap and told his listeners he was going to set a world record. At the end of the race, he had created a stunning world record of 9.86 seconds. A

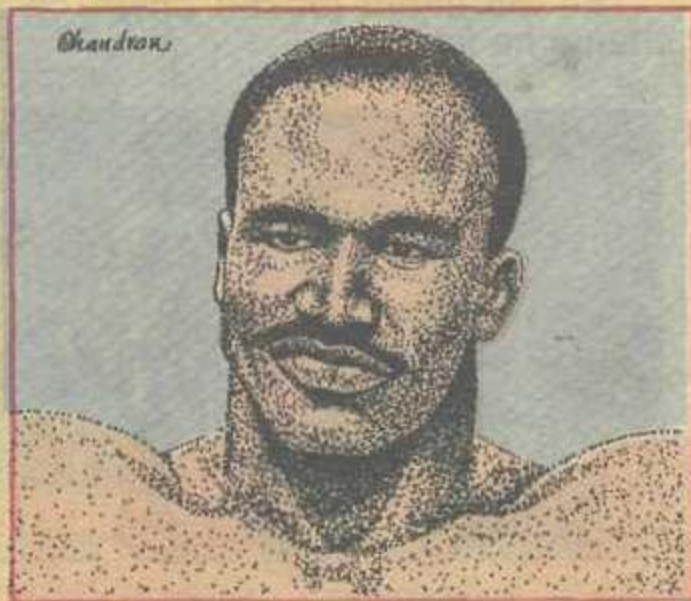


dream come true? The Canadian athlete, Ben Johnson, whose world record of 9.79 sec. (9.73 sec. in heats) at the Seoul Olympics in 1988 was erased after a drug disgrace, watched from the stands Carl Lewis take off at the signal and had, it appears, uncannily predicted his exact timings! The Seoul record of 9.92 sec. stood in Lewis's name since 1988, till Leroy Burrell (see *Chandamama*, August 1991) clipped .02 sec. to win the gold medal at the U.S. Championships in June this year. In Tokyo, Burrell (9.88 sec.) finished second and Dennis Mitchell (9.91 sec.) came third, to make it an all American sweep. The U.S. Relay team, with Carl Lewis as the anchor man, ran the 4 x 100m in Tokyo in a world record time of

37.50 sec. Besides these two world records, Lewis has to his credit 6 Olympic and 9 World Championships gold medals and he is the only athlete after Jesse Owens (U.S.A.) to win four golds in a single Olympic Games (Berlin, 1936).

RICHEST AMONG THEM ALL

The business magazine *Forbes* has placed the world heavyweight champion, Evander Holyfield, as the richest sportsman of 1991. His gross earnings for the year is expected to cross the 60 million dollars mark after his scheduled fight with former champion Mike Tyson in November. Tyson himself features as second, with an expected \$ 31.5 million income. *Forbes* expects the basketball superstar, Michael Jordan (\$ 16 million), and pugilists George Foreman (\$ 14 million) and Donovan Ruddock (\$ 10 million) to take the third, fourth, and fifth among the first ten places. The 12th place goes to tennis star Monica Seles (\$ 8 million), while Stefan Edberg (\$ 7.5 million) tops male tennis players, in the 14th place.



WHO FOOLED WHOM?

Once a wood-cutter was busy in the forest right from morning. By noon he was very tired and went to the nearby rivulet to quench his thirst. As he was returning, he saw something glistening in the sand and picked it up. He held it between his fingers, turning it this way and that.

While he was thus examining it, a merchant came that way and saw the twinkling little thing in the wood-cutter's palm. "Why are you holding a broken piece of glass in your hand?" he asked the wood-cutter. "Never mind, you give it to me, I shall give you ten rupees."

The wood-cutter thought: 'If he's willing to give ten rupees for this, there must be something unique about it.' He then said aloud, "If you offer a better price, I shall consider it."

A bargaining started. The merchant raised the amount first to fifteen rupees, then twenty. The wood-cutter shook his head, dissatisfied. "I don't value it more than twenty-five rupees," said the merchant reluctantly. "You may make up your mind by the time I go to the neighbouring village and come back."

As he walked to the village, the merchant confidently thought, "Who's going to offer more than that for a worthless piece of glass?" So, he did not hurry to get back to the forest, but took his own time to make the return journey. It was almost dusk by the time he reached the wood-cutter. "Well, what have you decided?"

"Oh! I sold it for a hundred rupees," said the wood-cutter coolly.

"You're a fool! It was a diamond, and it would have fetched at least five thousand rupees," said the merchant.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" The wood-cutter could not control his laughter. "Tell me, who's a real fool? I wanted to find its true worth, that's why I told you I had already sold it. Now, if you're keen to buy it, you've to give me nothing less than ten thousand rupees!"

The merchant looked down on the ground, lest his face revealed the shame he felt.



**New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire**

**BE GOOD,
BUT ...**

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought down the corpse. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O king, you seem to be making untiring efforts and without respite so as to achieve something. Tell me, why should you put yourself to such strain and discomfort in the dead of night? Agreed, you wish to do good, to others. But sometimes it may lead to trouble. That's what happened to King





Indrasen. Listen." The vampire then narrated his story.

Indrasen was the King of Manthara. He was a noble ruler and wished to avoid enmity with his neighbours. So much so, there was peace in the kingdom and his subjects led a smooth life. He never thought of enlarging his kingdom by going to war and annexing another kingdom. He maintained cordial relations with the other kings.

Neighbouring Makarantha was then ruled by Veerasimhan. The two kingdoms were inimical to each other for generations and Indrasen very much wanted to

end this state of affairs. He, therefore, sent a peace messenger to Veerasimhan. But he was not amenable to any improvement in their relationship. "We two kingdoms have been unfriendly to each other since long, long ago. Why should there be any change after so many years of enmity?" He sent back the messenger without a proper reply or response.

Indarasen was very unhappy. He was sad that despite the initiative taken by him, Veerasimhan still wanted to be in a state of war with his neighbour. Years passed. On the death of Veerasimhan, his son Kumarasimhan became the ruler of Makarantha. Unlike his father, he was a lover of peace. He was aware of the peace overtures from Indrasen when his father was king. He thought, if he were to marry Indrasen's daughter, Manohari, the two kingdoms would forget their old enmity and become friends for ever. Accordingly, he sent a message to Indrasen.

Indrasen's joy knew no bounds. He lauded Kumarasimhan's intentions and concluded that he might be a suitable match



for Manohari. However, Indrasen's son, Prince Dhirasen, held a different view. To accept someone from a family inimical for several years for an alliance would be nothing short of an insult. However, he did not speak out to his father. Some of the ministers of Manthara were aware of the divergence of views between father and son and decided to put it to good use for their own gain. A few of them, quite close to the royal family, secretly went to him and applauded his stand. They told him that Kumarasimhan had proposed marriage to Manohari with the sole intention of merging the two kingdoms and becoming the ruler himself. He did not want a war at that moment. Hence the negotiations for peace, they interpreted for the sake of Prince Dhirasen, and suggested that the best strategy for him would be to imprison his father and assume power himself.

Dhirasen did not waste a moment. He promptly put his father behind bars and declared himself the King of Manthara. Indrasen did not protest or react. Instead, he prayed to god that wisdom might dawn on his son.



He soon understood who were his son's advisers, and spent a quiet time in prison.

Immediately after ascending the throne, Dhirasen sent a message to Kumarasimhan, questioning his motives in proposing marriage to his sister. He accused the young ruler of Makaranta of evil designs to annex Manthara. He categorically stated that he would not agree to Manohari's marriage to Kumarasimhan. He even threatened him with action to retrieve his prestige.

When he read Dhirasen's message, Kumarasimhan really felt



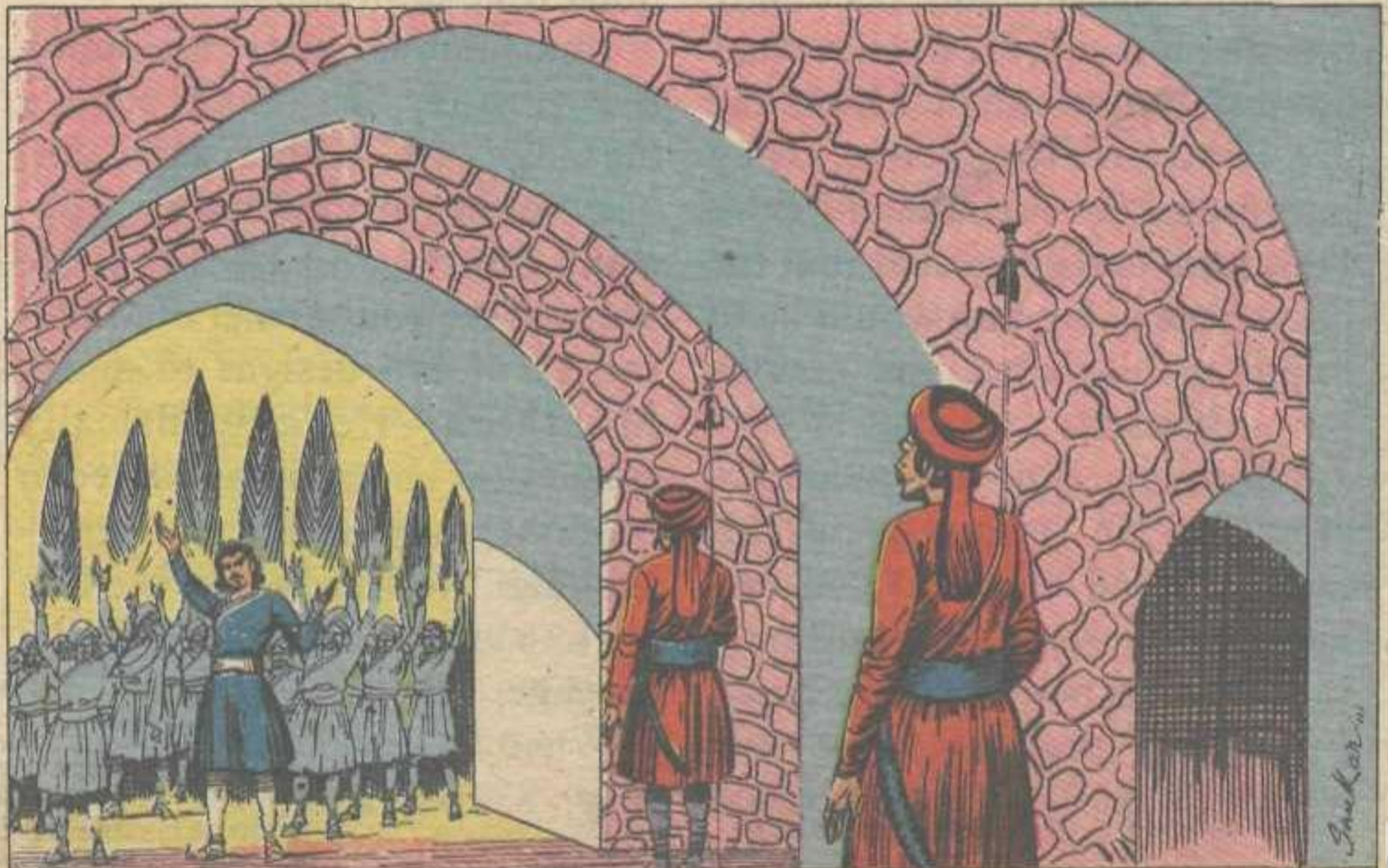
hurt. He was sad that his efforts to forge friendship with Manthara had been fructified. He was almost sure that Dhirasen would soon come to attack him. He decided to engage him in a fight, defeat him, release Indrasen from prison, and make him King of Manthara again.

Meanwhile, the people of Manthara were agitated when they heard that their affectionate king had been imprisoned. They were up in arms against Dhirasen, led by a young rebel called Simhanathan. He organised frequent skirmishes with the soldiers of Dhirasen throughout the kingdom. The internal distur-

bances prompted Dhirasen to forget Kumarasimhan for the time being, and he thought he would first get rid of Simhanathan.

However much he tried, Dhirasen could not catch hold of Simhanathan. Kumarasimhan took advantage of the disturbed conditions in Manthara and led his army against Dhirasen, who then realised that he was between the devil and the deep sea. The wily ministers, who had succeeded in pitting Dhirasen against his father, now conspired among themselves to choose one of them as the next king himself.

Kumarasimhan did not en-



counter much resistance from the army of Manthara, as many of the soldiers favoured the return of Indrasen as their ruler, and so they mostly fought among themselves. Dhirasen was in no time defeated. He was sent to prison, from where Indrasen was released and brought back to the palace as king. He embraced Kumarasimhan. "I've no words to thank you," he told the ruler of Makarantha.

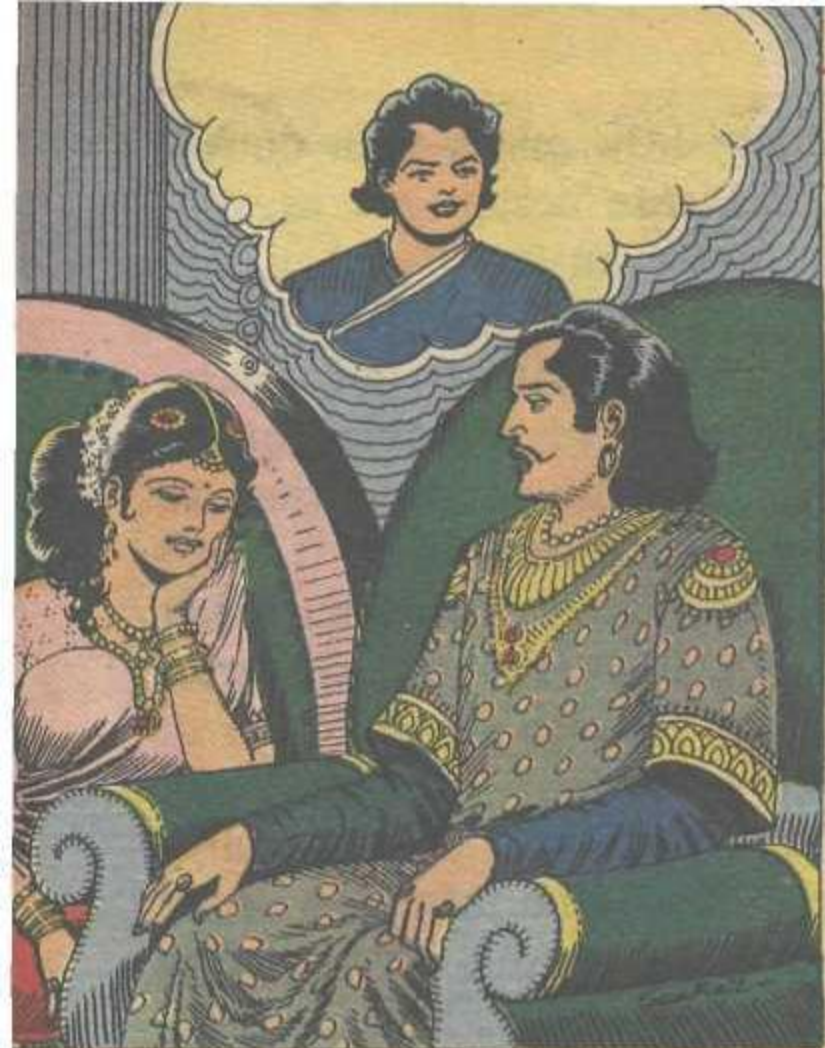
Kumarasimhan caught hold of Indrasen's hands and said, "The age-long enmity between our kingdoms is now a thing of the past. May I remind you of my proposal and assure you that I

still wish to marry your daughter? Please accept me as your future son-in-law."

Indrasen was happy that there was no animosity left in Kumarasimhan. "I've no objection to giving Manohari in marriage to you. However, isn't it only proper that we ascertained her wishes, too? I hope she'll agree, though I haven't yet told her of your proposal."

The king went to Manohari's apartments and informed her of Kumarasimhan's desire. She pondered for a while and said, "Father, I shall not hold back what I've in mind. When Dhirasen imprisoned you and made





himself king, it was Simhanathan who inspired the people to rise in revolt and fought with my cruel brother in utter disregard of his life. I wish to take him as my husband. However, I've an apprehension—whether Kumarasimhan won't retaliate when he comes to know of my decision.”

Indrasen was taken by surprise. Yet, he soon composed himself and said, reassuringly, “Don't have any such fear, my child. I shall abide by your wish and give your hand only to Simhanathan.”

Indrasen went back to Kumarasimhan and revealed his daugh-

ter's wish to him. He not only appreciated Manohari's views, but himself made all arrangements for her wedding with Simhanathan. He then bade farewell of Indrasen and returned to Makarantha, happy and contented.

The vampire concluded the story there and posed these questions to King Vikramaditya: “Thought he was victorious, Kumarasimhan did not annex Manthara to his kingdom. He was not able to marry Manohari as he had earlier wished. Was he right in handing back Manthara to Indrasen? Did Indrasen do the right thing in making a rebel his son-in-law? If you know the answers to these questions, do tell me, otherwise I warn you, your head will be blown into pieces!”

The king did not have to think long for the answers. He said, “Both Indrasen and Kumarasimhan were not only rulers but statesmen. Both wished to end the long-standing enmity between the two kingdoms. Kumarasimhan had considered his marriage with Manohari as just a means to an end, not the end in itself. He achieved his



objective when he defeated Dhir-
 asen, and gave back the kingdom
 to Indrasen. When he knew that
 Manohari wished to marry some-
 one else, he did not insist on
 making her his wife. If he had,
 she would have resented and
 their life would not have been
 smooth and peaceful. That's why
 he took the initiative to get her
 married to Simhanathan. And
 Indrasen was willing to accept

him as his son-in-law as the
 young man had even risked his
 life to achieve his aim. The king
 was convinced that Simhanathan
 would be a suitable husband for
 his daughter and son-in-law for
 him."

The vampire knew that Vikra-
 maditya had outsmarted him
 again, gave him the slip, and flew
 back to the ancient tree, taking
 the corpse along with him.

Raju : I've lost my job.

Ramu: Why? What happened?

Raju : I was told to do something that
 I didn't like.

Ramu: Really?

Raju : I was asked to look for another
 job.





LET US KNOW

Which is the oldest city of the world?

P.S. Udai, Burnpur

The ruined Egyptian city of Memphis by the side of the Nile, 19 km south of Cairo, was the earliest capital of a united Egypt, under King Menes, about 3200 B.C. Still surviving is the step pyramid built for King Zoser by Imhotep, architect and physician, about 2800 B.C., which is perhaps the world's oldest stone building.

What is the height of Eiffel Tower? How does it compare with Qutb Minar?

—R. Ananth, Santosapuram

The Eiffel Tower is 1,050 ft tall; the height of Qutb Minar is only 234 ft.

What is the difference between quagmire and quicksand?

—Satish Agrawal, Cuttack

Quagmire is wet, boggy ground that yields under the feet. Whereas quicksand is a loose watery sand, ready to swallow those who walk on it. You may at most entangle yourself in a quagmire and succeed in escaping, but it is very difficult to extricate oneself from quicksand.

What are armadillos?

—Rakesh R. Rao, Bombay

The armadillo is an animal which has an armour of bony plates on its back. They are seen mostly in Texas and range in size between 5 inches and 4.5 ft long. They can roll into an armoured ball if attacked. They feed on fruits and insects.

What are the flightless birds of the Antarctica?

—Lakshmi Raman, Madras

They are called penguins. They are marine birds, usually black and white in colour, and have thick feathers to protect them from the intense cold. They are between 1.6 ft and 4 ft tall. They look awkward when they walk on land; however, their wings have over the years evolved into flippers, enabling them to swim fast. They congregate to breed in what are called "rookeries"

ATHEIST

Narayanan was a very pious man. He regularly visited temples, offered worship there, and whenever an occasion came his way, he would address the gatherings at temples on religious topics.

Azhakan of the same village was an atheist. He never believed in god and tried to dissuade people from spending their time in temples and listening to religious discourses. He never approved of the way Narayanan went about teaching religion to the villagers. Naturally, they disliked each other—a fact known all over the village.

Once Narayanan took seriously ill. His condition deteriorated day by day, and people feared that his end might come soon. Many friends went to his house to enquire after him, but his doctor would not allow anybody in, so they all waited outside, with crestfallen faces. Azhakan came that way and joined the crowd. When Narayanan was told about Azhakan's presence, he wanted him to be called in.

Azhakan was surprised. "Why did you single me out?" he asked Narayanan. To which Narayanan replied in a feeble voice, "That's because, I'll be able to see everybody else in heaven. I'll be missing you there. Hence my desire to see you while I'm still here!"

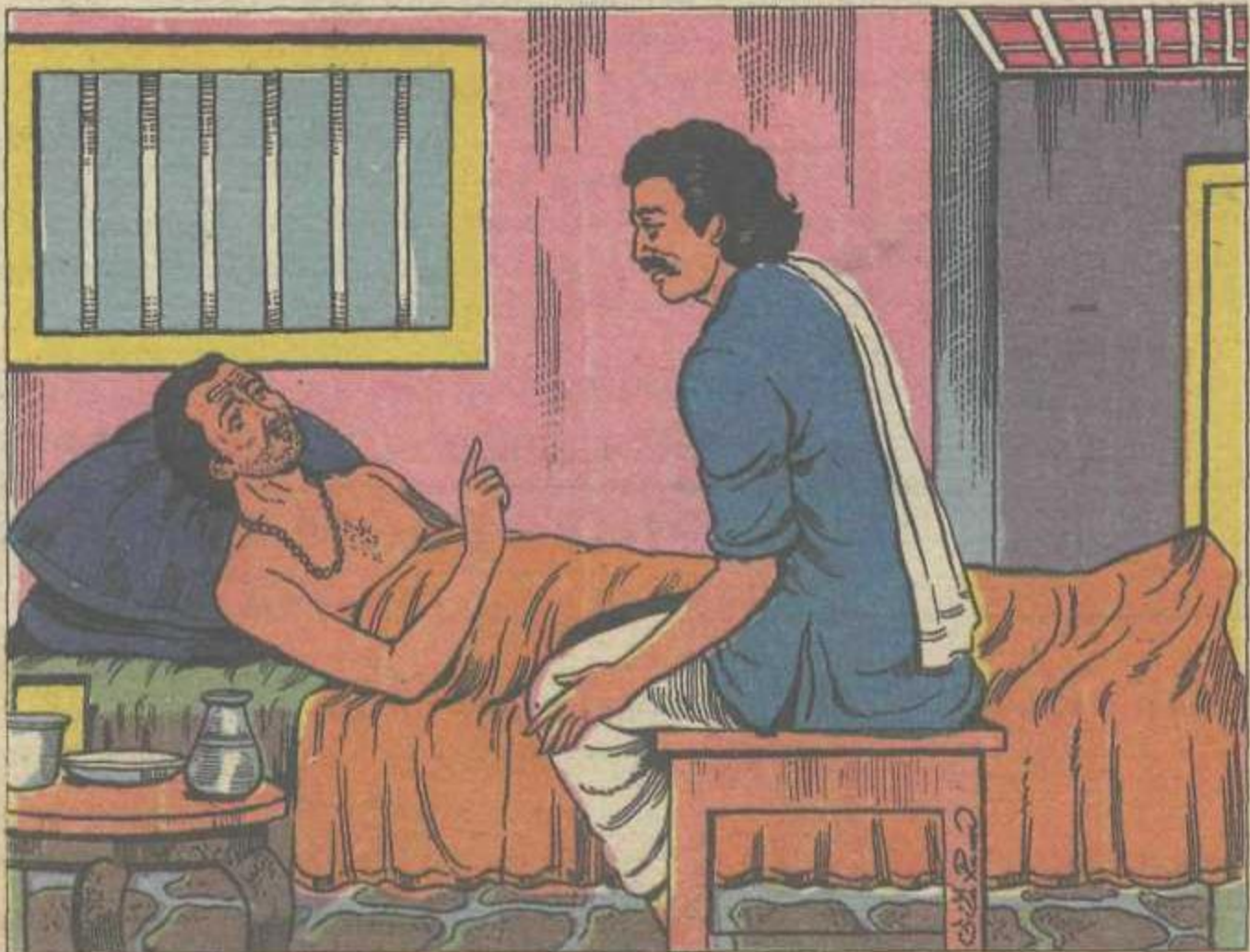


PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



M. Natarajan



M. Natarajan

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? If yes, you may write it on a post card and mail it to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, to reach us by 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 50/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

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PICKS FROM THE WISE

The best way to make children good is to make them happy.

—Wilde

Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.

—Emerson

Call no man happy till he is dead.

—Aeschylus

Is there anyone so wise as to learn by the experience of others?

—Voltaire

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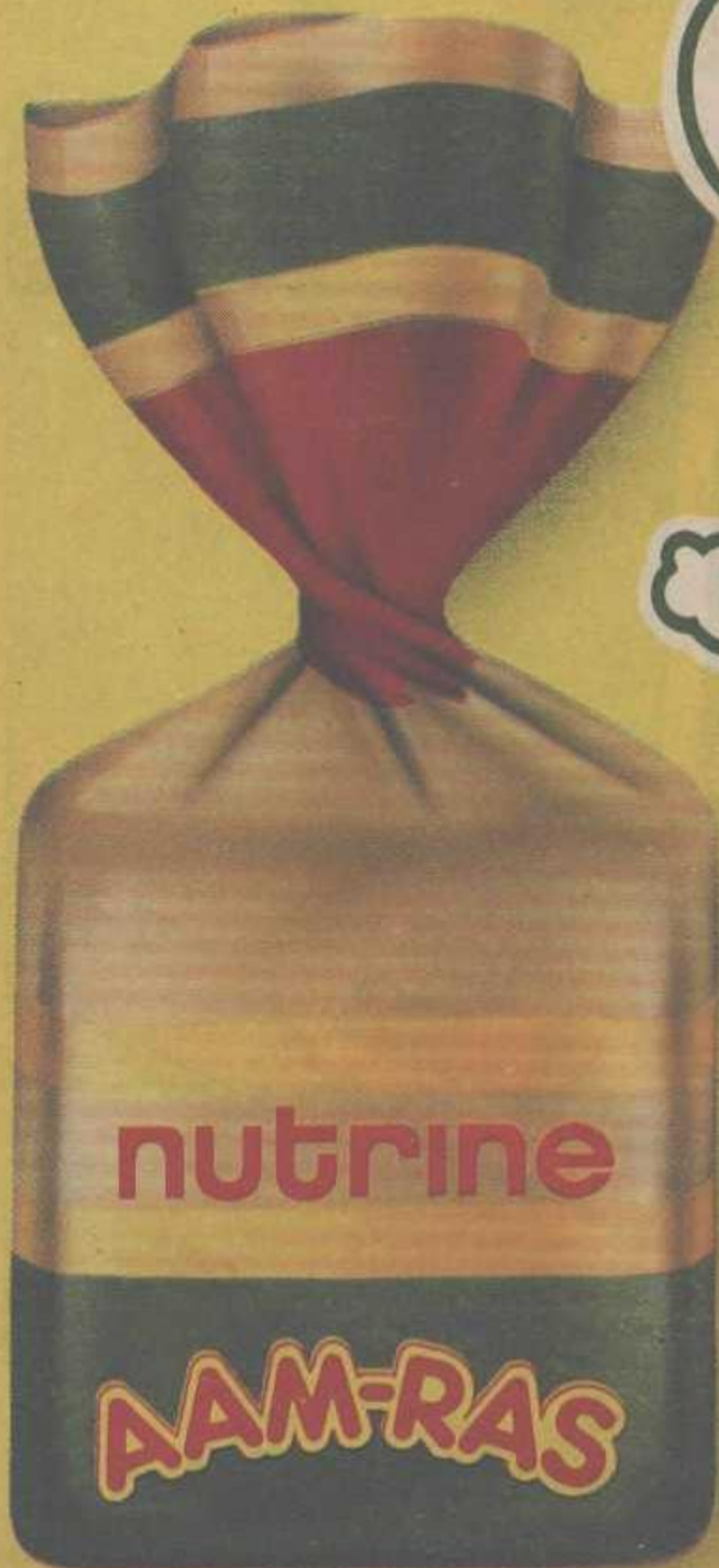
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